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BROTHER VAN



STELLA W. BRUMMITT



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WILLIAM WESLEY VAN ORSDEL

But the Northwest knows him only as Brother Van

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BROTHER VAN

By
STELLA W. BRUMMITT



THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN
NEW YORK CINCINNATI

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To the Best Known
and Best Loved Man in Montana
BROTHER VAN

W. H. Van Cleave
July 4 1919

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FOREWORD

GRATEFUL acknowledgment is hereby given for the interest and helpfulness shown by many people in Montana while I was collecting material for this book. To have known Brother Van better has been a joy, and to have met his beloved people "out where the west begins" has been a privilege.

The readers of this biography owe much to the Rev. George Logan and to the Rev. A. W. Hammer, both old-time friends of the pioneer missionary. From them have come stories and tales of adventure which could not have been forced from the boyishly modest preacher himself.

The story is sent out with the hope that through it some young people may add a new name to their list of heroes.

STELLA W. BRUMMITT.

CHAPTER I

A BOY AT GETTYSBURG

NOW, boy, watch and you'll see one of the sights of the war! Our troops are going to charge and take that battery."

It was the first day of the great battle of Gettysburg, July 1, 1863; and the Confederate cavalry leader, General Jenkins, at his post on a sheltered hillside, was pointing out to a rough-clad, barefoot boy from a near-by farmhouse the movements of the troops on the opposite side.

As William Wesley Van Orsdel had heard at home of the battles in which his ancestors had fought, he may have wondered if some time, he, too, would march away to war. He had never dreamed that while he was still a boy one of the most important battles in modern history would take place in the quiet fields and on the wooded hills surrounding the little farm where he lived.

The opening of the battle found him ready to take his part whatever it might be, even though he could not be one of the fighters. He soon found that there was no lack of opportunity to help. Fearlessly he went back and forth among the men of both the Northern and Southern armies, carrying water to the wounded no matter what the color of the uniform they wore, and relieving the distress of many a stricken soldier.

In the course of one of his errands of helpfulness he suddenly found himself at the side of the dreaded Jenkins, whose cavalry raids had made his name a terror to all of the farmers of the region because of the heavy toll of horses, cattle, and grain which he took from them. Jenkins' present orders were to guard the baggage train and hospital of the Confederate army commanded by General Ewell, and as he waited at his post he chatted easily with the bright and attractive farmer lad who showed himself to be so interested in all the stirring events that were going on around him.

William was a loyal Federal at heart and he felt decidedly uncomfortable in the presence of

the Southerner as he followed the General's explanation of what was happening on the adjacent hills. It was a scene of furious struggle and of seemingly wild disorder upon which they looked. Now the Federals and now the men in gray appeared to have control. Then suddenly Jenkins shouted, "Now, boy, watch, and you'll see one of the sights of the war!"

A fresh and powerful force of Confederate troops was advancing steadily, and to his dismay William saw that the blue lines along Seminary Ridge were giving way. It was one of the brilliant actions of the battle, the charge of a fiery Southern general, Jubal Early, and the boy's heart sank as the Federal positions were overrun and their guns captured. He could catch glimpses of the men in blue retreating through the streets of the little town of Gettysburg to the slopes of Cemetery Hill. He hid from the Confederate general his fear lest the attacking forces might drive the Northerners even further back, but as the afternoon passed, the fighting became less violent and when night fell Cemetery Hill was still in possession of Federal troops.

The following two days were filled with thrilling adventures for the boy as he saw thousands of men struggling desperately in the valleys and on the hills where he knew every path and almost every tree. It seemed very strange to him that these familiar places—Round Top, Little Round Top, Seminary Ridge, and the peach orchard should suddenly become of such importance. From the gossip of the village, however, he knew in general what the Federal commanders had to do, and to many a scouting party he was able to give valuable information about trails, roads, and observation points.

Everywhere there were wounded men crying for water and all through the hot days William hurried from point to point, carrying help and cheer. Often he was in danger from the heavy shell fire, for Gettysburg saw the greatest artillery engagement that had ever been known. Five hundred and sixty-nine tons of shells were hurled by the opposing batteries in the course of three days. The boy had at one time a moment of breathless suspense when a cannon ball fell near him, but it failed

to explode. Except for some powder marks on his face, he came through those trying days without injury.

William's work was not done when he had spent the daylight hours in going among the wounded on the field. In the evening, when there was a lull in the fighting, he went into the village carrying news of the battle and helping friends whose homes were surrounded by the fury of the conflict. He was saddened by the death of his friend, Jennie Wade, a girl of twenty, who had been killed by a chance shot that came through the door of the house. She was the only resident of the town killed during the whole battle. The home of another friend, Josephine Rogers, stood where the thickest of the fight came in the last two days of the battle. William watched over the safety of this eighteen-year-old girl, and was able to give assistance and comfort in the hours of danger.

On the first day, as General Carroll of the Union forces fell back, he saw the girl at her door and exclaimed, "What are you doing here? This house is in the trail of the greatest battle of the war. Seek a place of safety!"

“Mother has gone, but I have bread in the oven. As soon as it is baked, I will go,” replied Josephine.

When she took the fragrant bread out of the oven, there were so many hungry soldiers that wanted it that she decided to bake more for the struggling men. This work she continued for three days, and gave bread to the troops on both sides. Her home became a refuge for the wounded, and all the delicacies she could find were placed at the disposal of the soldiers. On the last day of the battle the house was in the line of General Pickett’s charge against the Union lines on Cemetery Hill. From the riddled house the bodies of seventeen men were taken, some in blue, some in gray; but the nurse and benefactress of both came through the event without a scratch.

When at last the Confederates were forced to withdraw, after having struggled gallantly but in vain to drive the Union forces from Cemetery Hill, and from the adjoining hills now famous in history—Round Top and Little Round Top—it was found that rarely if ever had armies suffered such a high proportion of



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GENERAL HANCOCK AND HIS MEN NEAR ROUND TOP

The Battle of Gettysburg was fought among the hills surrounding William Van Orsdel's home

losses. Meade, the Federal commander, went into the battle with eighty-two thousand men. He lost in killed, wounded, and missing twenty-three thousand. General Lee had moved on Gettysburg with about seventy-three thousand men and his losses were as large as those of Meade if not larger.

The scenes of daring and of strife in those exciting days of battle and the talks with the wounded men could not but make a deep impression on such a thoughtful boy as William Van Orsdel. He saw what men were given power to accomplish when they held their lives as nothing in the struggle for the things which they believed to be right. The memory of those stirring days with the acts of sacrifice and of heroism which he had witnessed made him long for the time when as a man he could engage in such deeds of action and of daring as those of the soldiers. With the thoughtfulness which marked his quiet days on the farm and in the country school, he now began to look forward to some life task that would call for hardship and adventure and would make his life of the largest service to those in need.

There was a dauntlessness in William which was partly due to the fact that he had pioneer ancestry. His great-grandfather came over from Holland to New Jersey with the early settlers. His grandfather settled in Pennsylvania about the time of the Revolution, and William's father was born there. His mother came from England, and in the little farmhouse near Gettysburg, William was born on March 20, 1848. Hard work and heavy responsibilities fell to the boy early in life, for when he was but fourteen years old, his father died. He then had the care of his mother and sister and the management of the farm. Two strenuous years followed; then his mother died and the children were separated and taken into the homes of relatives.

William was now cared for by an aunt, whose farm was close to Gettysburg. The change made it possible for him to attend a better school and he was proud to become a student of Hunterstown Academy. Eagerly did he grasp this opportunity to prepare himself to render the greatest service in whatever life-work should open before him.

CHAPTER II

EXPLORERS OF A CONTINENTAL PURCHASE

AS William pored over his big geography in the firelight of his Pennsylvania home, that great stretch of territory vaguely called the "Northwest" filled his mind with interesting visions of possible adventures. Another name given to it by his elders, and by the books, was the "Great American Desert," and the boy could never hear enough of the tales that came out of it. He always wanted to learn more about the Indians, with their strange beliefs and customs, and about the great brown herds of buffalo that roamed over the plains, and that were being slaughtered wantonly by white man and red man alike. He day-dreamed of Indian camps, of the long wagon-trains of venturesome pioneers, of swift, pony express riders, and of the hardy hunters of wild animals in the mountains.

"When I am old enough, I am going west," said the boy to his friends. "I shall come back to Pennsylvania to live, but I am going to see the land of Lewis and Clark first."

The adventures of these explorers had a great fascination for the schoolboys of that period even as they have at the present time. The great western land of which William dreamed became known to the world principally through the journeys of these daring men. William loved to hear about every one of their wonderful experiences. The story of the Louisiana Purchase, by which most of these territories had been acquired by the United States, was a favorite, too. He liked especially to read about the day when the Louisiana Purchase had the unique experience of flying three different flags in twenty-four hours. In 1803 Spain ceded all this unexplored land to France. France sold it to the United States. So in one day the Spanish flag came down and, for form's sake, the French flag was put up; and in turn that was lowered for the flag that has floated over the Purchase ever since, the Stars and Stripes.

President Jefferson made plans at once for the exploration of the new domain, and chose as the leaders of the expedition two young Virginia college men of energy, ability, and high character. They were well fitted for the dangerous enterprise ahead. None but stout hearts could have completed the venture, of which William Wesley Van Orsdel and thousands of other boys were to hear and read many years later. Lewis was President Jefferson's secretary and a man whom he loved much. Jefferson has left this fine appreciation of him: "Of courage undaunted, possessing a firmness and perseverance of purpose which nothing but impossibilities could divert from its direction, careful as a father of those committed to his charge, yet steady in the maintenance of order and discipline, intimate with Indian character, customs and principles, honest, disinterested, liberal, of sound understanding, and a fidelity to truth so scrupulous that whatever he should report would be as certain as if seen by ourselves."

The maps showed few cities on the Missouri River when Lewis and Clark started on their

expedition. St. Louis was then forty years old; it contained less than two hundred houses and about two thousand people, nearly all of whom were French. These men who started up the Missouri in the fleet bearing the expedition, little dreamed that from the territory which they were to explore there would be carved the great states of Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon—fertile and prosperous states from which would come the necessities to strengthen nations in need in the great war more than a hundred years later. Not only wheat, sugar, and cattle, but timber, and metals to renew the world's shipping, were to come from those western fields, forests, and mines.

The fleet consisted of three craft; the largest was a keel-boat, fifty-five feet long, drawing three feet of water, carrying a sail, and propelled by twenty-two oars, eleven on each side. It had a forecastle and a cabin guarded by breastworks to protect against Indian attacks. The other two were piroques. These were boats bound together side by side and floored

over; one with seven oars, another with six oars, and both carried sails.

Besides Lewis and Clark, the party consisted of three sergeants—Ordney, Pryor, and Lloyd—twenty-three privates, two interpreters, and a Negro servant. The interpreters were Charbonneau and his Indian wife, Sacajawea. The Negro, whose name was York, was Clark's slave and body servant. Many heroes were discovered in that company before it had reached the waters of the Pacific. There is just one heroine, Charbonneau's wife, Sacajawea, or the Bird Woman. By birth she belonged to the Shoshone tribe. When a little girl she had been taken prisoner in a war between the Minnetarees and Shoshones and sold to a traveling Frenchman, who was a roving hunter and guide. He brought her up as a slave and afterward married her. Sacajawea guided the expedition and acted as interpreter, all the while giving her baby tender and watchful care. She received no gift when the party disbanded, but to-day she lives in the grateful memory of the West as one of its real explorers and a true benefactress. In the city

park in Portland there stands a statue in honor of this brave Indian matron.

The romantic episode of the return of this woman guide to her own tribe was one of the strange incidents of the expedition. Over unknown trails the daring scouts went in the untracked wilderness. It is hard to realize the suffering they endured from hunger, sickness, and other dangers. Their advance along the upper Missouri is of particular interest here. One day Captain Lewis, who was traveling on foot in order to lighten the canoes, climbed a high cliff and there before his glad eyes lay the "Land of the Shining Mountains," for such was the Indian name for the region which was afterward known as Montana. As they pressed on, the roaring of water sounded in the distance, and soon the great falls of the Missouri came into view. Here the river drops over four hundred feet in a ten-mile stretch. The map that Lewis and Clark made of this section is so accurate that in 1892, when William Van Orsdel resided temporarily in the town of Great Falls, it was reproduced in facsimile with the modern improvements added.



A STATUE IN HONOR OF SACAJAWEA IN THE CITY PARK,
PORTLAND, OREGON

It was near the falls that Sacajawea recognized the spot where she had been taken prisoner by the Minnetarees.

Just at that point in their progress the expedition was in need of horses for the journey across the mountains, and taking Sacajawea, Captain Clark set out to find her people and to buy horses from them. Captain Lewis went with another detachment on a different course. After much journeying he found Chief Cameahwait and gave him an American flag as an emblem of peace. The chief took them to a leathern lodge, smoky and ancient, and seated them on green pine boughs covered with antelope and buffalo skins. A warrior in splendid attire kindled a fire in the center of the lodge; the chief produced a pipe and tobacco; the warriors took off their moccasins, showing the white men that they were expected to remove their shoes.

When all was in readiness and the circle completed, the chief lit his pipe. He then made a speech, and at its close he indicated the four cardinal points with the stem of his pipe, beginning with the east and ending with the

north. He handed the pipe to Lewis, who supposed that he was to smoke, but the chief drew the pipe back three times, then pointed to the heavens and to the center of the group. This concluded the ceremony and Lewis was allowed to smoke.

After the foregoing reception Lewis was permitted to tell how he and Captain Clark had separated as they started to find Sacajawea's people, and how they had agreed to meet at Three Forks but had missed one another. He explained his anxiety concerning the safety of his friend and his party and asked for help. Suddenly some Indians came in crying, "White man! White man!" Eagerly the group seated around the fire left the lodge, as from its entrance they saw that Captain Clark's party was drawing near. Sacajawea approached the watching Indians sucking her fingers, signifying that they were of her native tribe. As she advanced, a woman darted to meet her and weeping and laughing alternately embraced her. It was then found that they had been childhood friends and now were meeting for the first time since the day on which

the Minnetarees had taken Sacajawea captive.

Captain Lewis and Captain Clark embraced also in their joy at meeting, and the chief called for the ceremony of smoking. The warriors and the white men arranged themselves in a circle, and the pipe was about to be smoked when Sacajawea was sent for to act as interpreter. She entered modestly and shyly, but when her eyes sought the chief, she suddenly ran to him weeping once more, for the big chief was her own brother, from whose side she had been snatched on the day of the tribal war.

After this meeting Charbonneau and Sacajawea were taken to the camp of the Shoshones. Anything that the white men wanted was easily secured now. Fifty horses were bartered for and delivered to them, so the expedition was able to proceed. Sacajawea was eager to go to the coast to see the "big water" and the "monster fish," but the time of parting had come. Charbonneau was paid five hundred dollars and thirty-three cents for two years' service, and the little Bird Woman, Sacajawea, was given nothing but the gratitude and respect of the white man.

The party proceeded with other guides and finished the hard journey through the mountains to the Columbia River and to the Pacific. They brought back to the American public a romantic story of strange animals, of prairies, of rivers, of waterfalls, of mountains, and, above all, of Indians with their weird, barbaric customs, their strength, and their eagerness to learn.

As a result of the travels of Lewis and Clark, and of other explorers and early settlers who followed them, a strong interest in the West sprang up among the people of the East. Many adventure-seeking boys left homes of comfort in the older states during the next fifty years in search of larger opportunities in the opening West. But these glowing tales of Indian tribes, and of wealth easily gained, had another effect besides that of luring high-spirited boys to seek new fortunes beyond the Mississippi; there was also kindled a flame of missionary endeavor in the churches of the East. Some of the great chapters of American history are written about the men who gave their lives to the task of carrying the gospel to

the Indians, and to establishing churches in the new settlements scattered over almost half a continent.

Growing up as he did in a Christian home, William Van Orsdel heard the stories of the brave pioneers of the Cross as well as those of explorers and hunters. It is not strange that as a young man he should respond with enthusiasm to the calls that were being made throughout the churches of the East for strong, energetic, and devoted men to enlist for Christian service in these new and difficult fields.

William had already proved the depth and earnestness of his Christian faith. When a boy on the farm he had given his life fully into God's guidance and keeping. That he had caught the spirit of his Master he showed to all about him by his many acts of neighborly service to those who were in need. Although he had to work very hard on the farm even while attending school, he found time on Saturdays and Sundays to visit the sick and the unfortunate and to help and encourage them. Thus the boy who had carried the news of the battle of Gettysburg to the village people now be-

came the bearer of news of another battle—of the battle against all that is mean and unworthy in life—and of the Great Captain of our salvation who gives the victory to those who in loyalty of heart place themselves under his leadership. The people came to love his simple telling of the old message and crowded the little churches and schoolhouses whenever he would speak to them. Soon they began to call him the “boy evangelist” which was only the first of many honors that his friends and neighbors were to pay him in the long years of useful service that lay ahead.

Thus young manhood brought to William the firm conviction that in the missionary service of his church in those distant regions of the Northwest, where there was such need for young men who could be at once both pioneers and Christian leaders, he would find the life-work which would allow him to be of the largest service to his country and to his God. Each year brought him a stronger sense of beckoning Indian hands. To these people of the western plains and forests, he must go and preach; his decision was clear and firm. His

small savings were far from sufficient to cover the cost of the long and expensive journey, for he found that the money which he could scrape together would carry him only as far as Champaign, Illinois. He had faith, however, that if he made the start, the way would be opened for him to reach his final destination in Montana. He knew how to do hard work; he could earn his fare for the remainder of the journey.

So William started on his eagerly anticipated travels. No mother was there to give a farewell blessing, but he carried with him an abundance of good wishes from the people in the neighborhood of Gettysburg, for they had known him since childhood and loved him for his helpful, friendly ways, and for his sincere character. Tucked away in a safe pocket was his most highly prized possession, an exhorter's license granted him in recognition of his work as an evangelist, a high honor for a boy of seventeen. Alone and unafraid he pressed on toward the western land of his dreams.

CHAPTER III

WESTWARD

THE first task that William Van Orsdel found, as he journeyed westward, was at Oil City, Pennsylvania. He had a cousin at that place whom he visited, and who urged him to remain and run an oil-pump. He was offered more money for the work weekly than the country lad had ever seen at one time; so in April of the year 1870, and while on his way to a thrilling career in the West, the boy became a day-laborer. At the end of the first week in his new occupation, William was surprised to learn from the foreman that he was expected to run the pump on Sunday. When he protested against this use of the day of rest, he was told that it would be all right if he would hire a substitute.

“I’d as soon do it myself as to cause another to work on the Lord’s Day. I’ll do neither,” was the courageous reply.

William worked through the summer and into the autumn. When he announced his intention of quitting he was offered an increase in wages, although he had never worked on Sunday as his co-workers had done. Instead of earning on that day, he had used his time for the organization of a Sunday-school, and with true missionary spirit, had talked of sacred things with his fellow workmen. Just before the time that William was to leave the pumping job, the "bush meetings" were announced. Woodmen would go into the forests and cut a road as they went. When they reached a place fitted by nature for an auditorium, a rough pulpit would be erected, slab benches put in place, and all would be in readiness for a meeting.

The first night came and a large crowd, which was both serious and curious, gathered at the place of meeting, but no preacher arrived. The young oil-pumper who had organized the Sunday-school, and had talked with thoughtless workmen, was sought for and urged to preach. Modestly he assumed the role of evangelist to the waiting people, and three

persons were led to know the saving power of God on that night.

For ten days the meetings continued; many people having their interest in religion re-kindled, and many others made to feel the obligation of right living for the first time. From these inspiring gatherings William Van Orsdel went to Walnut Bend, an old settlement where, with the exception of funeral sermons, no religious services had been held for six years. Here a great revival occurred which lasted three weeks, and forty citizens set to work to make their community life mean more for faith and goodness than ever before.

Then followed meetings for three weeks at Oleopolis, where twenty-five people renewed their faith and endeavors. Meetings were held at Pit Hole, and continued for as long a period, and with the same encouraging result. The three places where successful meetings had been held were put into a circuit. One hundred and thirty-five members were received, and the Presiding Elder asked William to take the charge at a good salary for those days, and it included the privilege of boarding around.

The school-teachers and preachers in former times accepted "boarding around" as one of the compensations of their calling. They recognized its social value, even though dreading some of its privations. It meant that the homes of the community were opened in succession to the itinerant, who usually spent a week in the shelter of each home, sharing its luxuries and difficulties as a member of the family. He was then passed on to the next nearest neighbor until the round of homes had been made, when the process was started all over again.

But the boy evangelist turned his back on the joys of boarding around, for again came tidings from the West. The need of reinforcements for the missionaries in the Oregon territory was related to him, and tales of the settlers' needs and of their privations. Stories reached him, too, of the brave freighters serving the people of the wilderness; so again the call of the West made the days of the boy preacher restless. That map of the Louisiana Purchase became very real in those days of decision.

Many years earlier Wilbur Fisk, who had been stirred by a strange story of the Indians, had made an appeal in the columns of *The Christian Advocate*. The incident which had come to the knowledge of Wilbur Fisk would stir the heart of any eager young Christian. In these days when all churches are giving to home missions as never before the story must be retold, for it brought the beginning of Christian work in the section where the quest was made.

Four Indians garbed in their odd dress appeared on the streets of St. Louis in the year 1832. All through the summer and fall they had traveled, for they had come two thousand miles in search of the "White Man's Book of Heaven," and to ask that teachers would be sent to Oregon. General Clark, the distinguished explorer, was then superintendent of Indian affairs. He had charge of all Indians in the far West, with headquarters at St. Louis. The Indians were received hospitably by General Clark and cared for through the winter. He was a Roman Catholic and they attended the church services regularly. Dur-

ing their visit to St. Louis two of the Indians died, and the other two decided to return to their people. A farewell banquet was given to these well-entertained guests and at which one of them made the following speech:

“I came to you over the trail of many moons from the setting sun. You were the friends of my fathers, who have all gone the long way. I came with an eye partly open for my people who sit in darkness. I go back with both eyes closed. How can I go back blind to my blind people! I made my way to you with strong arms through many enemies and strange lands that I might carry much back to them. I go back with both arms broken and empty. Two fathers came with us. They were the braves of many winters and wars. We leave them asleep here by your great water and wigwams. They were tried in many moons and their moccasins wore out.

“My people sent me to get the white man’s Book of Heaven. You took me to where they worship the Great Spirit with candles, but the book was not there. You showed me the images of the Great Spirit and the pictures of

the good land beyond, but the book was not among them to tell us the way. I am going back the long trail to my people in the dark land. You make my feet heavy with gifts and my moccasins will grow old with carrying them and yet the book is not among them. When I tell my poor blind people, after the more snow, in the Big Council that I did not bring the book, no word will be spoken by our old men or by our young braves. One by one they will rise up and go out in silence. My people will die in darkness and they will go a long path to other hunting grounds. No white man will go with them, and no white man's Book of Heaven will make the way plain. I have no more words."

Among the early missionaries, who became inspired by a knowledge of the quest for the "White Man's Book of Heaven," were Francis McCormick, known as the "man with the fist and the ax," and John Kobler, the first Methodist preacher north and west of the Ohio River. Another of these leaders was Thomas Hall Pearne, a young man of great culture. He practically received his commission from

Bishop Janes in 1851. "Go to Oregon; live there; work there and die there for Jesus," said the bishop. Young Pearne went west by way of Panama and landed in San Francisco. William Taylor was then leading the religious forces of the sunset city, and Pearne preached in the streets of San Francisco for Taylor; then he sailed to the mouth of the Columbia River and finally reached Portland.

On the first Sabbath day the new missionary appeared in his wedding finery, for he had brought a wife to share in his labors, and the stalwart pioneers looked askance at the silk hat, kid gloves, silk necktie, and morocco shoes of the new preacher. "You do not look like the fortieth cousin of a Methodist," said one of the men frankly. The young man asked to be given a hearing and preached with such spiritual power that the people gladly accepted him as their leader. Pearne erected the first Protestant house of worship on the Pacific coast from Cape Horn to the Straits of Juan de Fuca. When later this pioneer became presiding elder, his district included all of the United States from the Missouri River to the Pacific

Ocean, the total area being 1,170,000 square miles, and it covered all that part now known as Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, North and South Dakota. The population was 13,294 white people and 100,000 Indians.

It was toward this vast territory that William Van Orsdel was working his way. He left Oil City with only enough money to carry him to Chicago. He stopped at Champaign to see a relative, and then went to Chicago, where he met with a man who made clear to him just what his future field was to be. This man was Chaplain McCabe, who was thrilling thousands by his lectures on the bright side of Libby Prison, and by his singing of such songs as "The Sword of Bunker Hill." McCabe was secretary of the Board of Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and had taken for his slogan, "A church a day," as he sought funds for the building of churches in the south and west. To this man William confided his dreams and desires, and leading him to the South Park Avenue Church, his new friend invited him to preach. The Chaplain's keen eyes twinkled as he listened, and visions

came to him of the churches which this youth would help him to build.

From Chaplain McCabe William learned much of the work to be done in the west. "You are on the right track, young man," he said. "Go west to Montana, and help to build the kingdom in the western wilds." He backed his advice with some money and added, "You will realize what Paul meant when he rejoiced that he did not build on any man's foundation. You will not find many foundations out there." William Van Orsdel did not feel that he was yet justified in having aid from the Missionary Society, but he accepted the money as a personal gift from his new friend. He set out again on his journey for the unexplored land of his dreams.

CHAPTER IV

A SKY PILOT'S RACE UP THE MISSOURI

IT was a penniless but hopeful youth who came into Sioux City in the spring of 1872 and made a straight path to the Methodist parsonage. Pastor Crozier was the minister who received the traveler, and who found a congenial spirit in him. There was much work at hand, and under his new friend's direction, William gave himself eagerly to new, and yet familiar tasks. Sunday-schools were organized in schoolhouses, and the religious interest of the community was revived as the happy boy evangelist sang his songs and preached his earnest message. He was not idle for a day.

Early in June a minister named Bennett Mitchell returned from New York, where the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church had been held, with the news that a Conference of North Iowa had been organized. Mr. Mitchell had been appointed as its

presiding elder and he offered Van Orsdel a charge in this new field.

"Take the night to consider it," he said. "Pray about it, and give me your answer in the morning."

It was settled long before morning, for William had learned that the same General Conference had formed a Rocky Mountain Conference to embrace the territories of Washington, Idaho, Montana, and a part of Wyoming.

"The line of duty is very clear to me. I must go to the mountains." Such was the young pioneer's firm reply on the morrow.

That very day a boat was starting up the Missouri for the Northwest. The captain was hastily sought and interviewed. The fare was found to be one hundred dollars.

"I haven't that much money," was the missionary's frank reply to the statement concerning the sum required.

"Well, I have no through passenger, so I'll take you for seventy-five."

"I'm sorry, but I haven't got it."

"Well, what in the world are you going to Montana for?"

"Oh, to sing and pray, and to encourage people to be good."

The captain eyed the would-be passenger wonderingly. "Well, I have been running this boat for a good many years, but I have never known of a person going to Montana for that purpose," he exclaimed. "If you will sing and preach for us, I'll take you for fifty dollars."

The embarrassed young man was forced to admit that he did not have even five dollars; then he made a venture of faith.

"If you will take me to Fort Benton, you will find fifty dollars waiting for you here in care of Pastor Crozier when you return," he said.

The good-natured captain agreed. When the boat came into Sioux City again many weeks later, he promptly received the fifty dollars. So much was he impressed by the incident, that he sent the greater part of the money to Montana for the missionary's work—to help "encourage people to be good." The debt was paid in a curious manner. A group of friends back in the oil region of Pennsylvania had been following the western journey

of the young missionary with deep interest but with no real knowledge of his exact circumstances. They realized, however, that some money would "come in handy," and without previous notice or arrangement had forwarded to Pastor Crozier, at Sioux City, a sum which made it possible for him to keep the promise which the dauntless Van Orsdel had made to the captain.

It was on June 12, 1872, that the boat, the *Far West*, started on its twelve-hundred-mile trip up the Missouri River carrying the missionary to his new work. This proved to be a notable run, the quickest made by any boat to Fort Benton. The reason for the unusual speed was the fact that a rival boat, the *Nellie Peck*, had left Sioux City two days before, and the captain was eager to pass her. In spite of insufficient fuel, hostile Indians, and difficult channels, the *Far West* came to Fort Benton one hour before the *Nellie Peck*.

On the second day out from Sioux City the tenderfoot missionary on the boat saw a battle between hostile Indians on the banks of the river, and the question came to him, "If we are

in hostile country so soon, what will it be when we get to Montana?"

Coming to the Upper Missouri, they found that the woodchoppers had been either killed or driven away. No coal was used on the river boats in those days; so whenever fresh supplies of cut wood were not ready at the usual supply points, the boat roustabouts would rush into the cottonwood groves near the bank, chop down trees and carry the logs on deck to be cut into lengths as the steamer proceeded. The pilot-house and other parts of the *Far West* showed that the aim of the Indians was far from perfect as they pursued the frantic workers, for the men escaped unhurt, while the boat was frequently struck by the shots of the attacking party.

At one time when the boat was nearly out of wood a landing was made close to a large cottonwood flat. The plank had scarcely touched the shore when from all directions there advanced parties of Sioux warriors in full war-regalia. Two braves with a great following came on board. One of them was a splendid specimen of Indian manhood. He stood over

six feet high and wore a brilliant bead war-bonnet, decorated with many eagle feathers; each feather represented a scalp taken in the terrible warfare which these tribes practised. In one hand he held a tomahawk, and with the other grasped the folds of his gorgeous robe. It was a critical moment. If these chiefs should be angered, the boat would be at the mercy of the band. The captain made gifts of pipes, beads, and jewelry, and without showing too much anxiety, tactfully persuaded them to depart.

When the Indians had taken their leave, the boat proceeded as far as it could go with its scanty supply of wood. Again a stop was made for fuel, and as the roustabouts were loading it, a remarkable personage suddenly appeared. He was a tall, athletic, white man, with long black hair flung back on his shoulders from beneath a wide-brimmed hat. His suit was of buckskin and he wore a cartridge belt, while on his arm there rested a fine rifle. As he came on board the vessel, the missionary watched him wonderingly. It was his first meeting with a man who was to become world

famous for his exploits in the far West, William F. Cody, known more commonly as Buffalo Bill.

These are not the only names by which this interesting man was called in the course of his long and thrilling career among cowboys and Indians. First he was little Billy Cody, the western messenger; then Wild Bill, the pony express rider, and as a grown man he was known as Bill Cody, the wagon master. Finally, to the heart's delight of boys and girls the world over, he became Buffalo Bill. For many years before his death in 1917, he was generally spoken of as Colonel William F. Cody; but to the Indians he will always be their beloved "Pa-has-ka," or "Long Hair."

When Cody was told about the braves having boarded the boat dressed in full war-regalia, he marveled. "That was the band of Sitting Bull and Rain-in-the-Face, two Sioux Indian chiefs," he exclaimed. "They have five hundred men with them and are out for a lark. It is miraculous that you escaped, for you have in the boat just what they most want—food and ammunition."



Courtesy of the American Bureau of Ethnology.

SITTING BULL WAS DRESSED IN FULL WAR REGALIA

Sitting Bull's life story has been the theme of many writers. This great warrior was a medicine-man, who preached of a happy day to come when the palefaces should all be wiped out, and the land which they had occupied should be restored to the Indians. To this end he greatly incited his people to murder and devastation, but one thing must be remembered, Sitting Bull believed firmly that the Indians were unfairly treated. He sternly declared, "God Almighty made me—God Almighty did not make me an agency Indian. I'll fight and die fighting before any white man can make me an agency Indian." And he did. He defied the government up to the very moment of his death in 1890; and his resistance did not end until he fell pierced by the bullets of the soldiers sent to take his person dead or alive.

Rain-in-the-Face was a warrior who had met all the tests of the exacting medicine-man, Sitting Bull. His breast had been slashed, and rawhide strips passed through it by which he was to hang until the flesh gave way. Sitting Bull was not satisfied with the test and main-

tained that the flesh had torn away too soon. Rain-in-the-Face thereupon demanded another trial, lest he spend the rest of his life despised as a squaw. So the strips were passed through the muscles of his back, and for two days he hung, taunting his torturers, jeering, and singing war songs. At last Sitting Bull was satisfied, and buffalo skulls were hung on the feet of the tortured brave so that the folds of flesh might tear away and release him. After that rather terrible test, he was counted worthy of the title of warrior. Rain-in-the-Face died at Standing Rock Agency in 1905.

The voyage in the *Far West* became more and more exciting as the boat proceeded. Indian camps came into view peopled so entirely by squaws and children, that it was evident that the men were out on hostile business. Great herds of buffalo and numberless droves of deer and antelope were to be seen roaming on the prairie.

Young Van Orsdel was fascinated by the novelty of it all. His high spirits, his friendliness, and his willingness to help in every way made him a general favorite, and he soon won

the complete confidence of the captain and the roustabouts. He gave a hand at any odd job that offered, singing as he worked, and daily living out his religion of happiness and trust. When the woodchoppers were at work, he would climb to some high point where he could watch the wide prairie for the approach of Indians. In leisure moments as the boat forged ahead he sang for the crew, much to their enjoyment, for his voice was of fine quality and persuasive in tone. He became a fast friend of Jack, the cabin boy, for he helped him to wash the dishes and arrange the tables. Many were the intimate talks they had about their distant homes and friends. As a result of this new friendship Jack became a Christian, and later abandoned the river to take up the varied life of a frontier preacher. So helpful was the missionary, that by the time the journey came to its close, he was called the Sky Pilot of the expedition. He was a friend to every one, from the captain to the lowest laborer.

The voyage contained one other interesting experience. At a landing near Fort Benton, a typical plainsman clad entirely in buck-

skin boarded the boat, saying, "I can't stay in this place any longer. There are too many hostile Indians." This was Jim Dexter, who became one of Montana's great landholders and one of its well-known pioneers. From the first moment of meeting there sprang up a warm friendship between him and William Van Orsdel. This tie grew stronger in the long years following, as in their different fields of effort they threw themselves into the task of building a commonwealth in the wilderness.

CHAPTER V

BROTHER VAN

ABOUT seven o'clock on the first day of July, 1872, a gloomy, clouded Sunday morning, the *Far West* drew up to the landing at Fort Benton and established the record for an up-river trip on the Missouri, seventeen days and twenty hours from Sioux City. That was an exciting Sabbath day for the settlement. The *Nellie Peck* arrived an hour later; while from St. Louis came the *Josephine* after a sixty-days' trip.

A number of ox-trains were waiting to take the incoming freight to the towns and settlements beyond; some of these were many days distant. Wagons drawn by mules and horses were crowded around the landing, eager for what business might turn up. Cowboys, Indians, and soldiers from the Fort mixed in the crowd, making the motley assembly which

greeted our Sky Pilot as he stepped on shore. All the white families came from the tiny shacks of the new town to join in the curious throng as it welcomed this unusual stir in the monotony of frontier life.

The tenderfoot did not know the terror of "gumbo," but as he made his way through the streets in the rain, he found the soil sticking to his shoes in such quantities as to make walking difficult. It was God's day, and in spite of the dismal weather, the missionary trudged through the town seeking a place to hold services. He was told that he could use the courthouse. This sounded encouraging and he turned toward the building eagerly. Disappointment was awaiting him, for it was only an adobe structure, and the rain had washed holes in the roof and walls through which muddy streams of water were pouring.

In continuing his search for a place in which to hold worship, William learned that a Roman Catholic priest, Father Van Gorp, was conducting a service in a saloon near by. He sought him out and was received cordially. On hearing the desire of the newcomer, the priest

assured him that he could have the room as soon as his service was concluded, for he intended to take passage on a boat which was to leave the Fort in a few hours.

It was at that afternoon meeting of his first day in Fort Benton that William Van Orsdel received the name of Brother Van. There was a frankness and kindness in the young man's manner toward these strangers before him. The years of unselfish service for others, and his conviction regarding the work he must do in the West had developed a magnetic personality. The rough and hearty frontier people were keen judges of character. They saw at once in the stranger, who had come among them so naturally and courageously, a sincere, helpful spirit. "Brother" was just the word that described him. "Van" was as much of that lengthy and dignified name of his as they felt that they could take the trouble to say. So, with the good-natured bluntness of the West, "Brother Van" he became. It now rarely occurs to any of his friends and neighbors that he has any other name. They would probably assure you, if you were to raise the

question with them, that he was christened "Brother Van."

Crowded in the saloon on that afternoon were the steamboat officers, roustabouts, freighters, cowboys, Indians, and settlers, making a strange audience for the young missionary's first Montana sermon. He would talk for a while, and then, when the attention wavered, he would sing the songs that some of them had heard back East before they had come under the hardening influences of the rough western life. Brother Van asked if they would like an evening service and received an eager request for one. The news of the arrival of this tenderfoot and of his message and singing had traveled fast; so in the evening a larger congregation gathered. Again he gave the message that many of them had been missing in a long period of separation from church life, and again hearts were stirred, as for the first time in years the uncertain voices tried to follow the singing of the gospel songs which had been sung "back home."

There is no written record of the sermons of that day; but the simple, straightforward



RUINS OF HISTORIC FORT BENTON, WHERE BROTHER VAN ATE JERKED BUFFALO MEAT AND HEARD
TALES OF INDIAN WARFARE

manner of the preacher made a lasting impression on the hearts of that strange crowd. The missionary spirit of the zealous youth so won the respect of the cowboys that they withheld from this tenderfoot the "initiation" which they were accustomed to give to strangers. Brother Van was a vigorous youth with a florid complexion and light hair. The simple directness of his manner and the good humor showing in his blue eyes, so ready to twinkle with fun, gained fast friends for him in the odd mixture of peoples.

While the *Far West* was in port, Captain Coulson extended the hospitality of the boat to his missionary passenger, though his obligations had really ceased when he reached the town. When the boat started back down the river, carrying the only people whom he knew, pangs of homesickness came to the lonely youth; now he felt himself truly a stranger in a strange land. But a new friend appeared. A good woman who had been at the service on Sunday opened her home to him, and established that night an "institution" which gradually extended throughout the state of Montana,

“Brother Van’s room.” Even in the newest town where a beginning was just being made, there was always some home in which a place was set apart to receive the welcome traveler whenever he could come that way.

On the Monday following that eventful Sabbath, Brother Van set out to explore the town. The central interest of Fort Benton was its fur trading. This industry was developed in the United States by the enterprise of John Jacob Astor. He saw that Canada was profiting by this trade, and in 1812 he petitioned Congress to establish fur trading posts within the boundaries of the United States, and to introduce such goods as were necessary for bartering with the Indians.

Trading posts soon began to dot the vast wilderness of the North and West. They were all built on the same general plan. A heavy stockade was made by driving tree trunks into the earth so close together as to make a wall, the only opening left being a massive double gate. In one of the sections of this gate was a small door through which in times of danger the trader could admit a single person at a

time. He could open it and talk with any Indian who came, without allowing the visitor to enter. Within the outer stockade was an open space; then in the center was a strongly built log or adobe structure containing the trader's quarters, storeroom, and the fort. In the wall of the storeroom was an opening about eighteen inches square. This was called the "trading hole" and was protected by heavy shutters controlled from the inside.

When the Indians came with their packs of furs the trader's men met them outside the stockade, and took from them all guns, bows, arrows, tomahawks, and any other dangerous weapons which they might be carrying. Then, in a group at a time, they were admitted to the stockade and the heavy gates locked behind them. They were virtually prisoners, and advancing across the open space between the stockade and the fort, they would come to the trading hole, where the agent of the fur merchant's company was waiting to barter with them.

One by one the Indians would offer to the trader, who was often an unscrupulous cheat,

the beautiful soft furs which had been secured by trapping and shooting amid the dangers and the hardships of the cold and lonely North. Gaudy calico, cheap blankets, or the bad combination of bullets and whisky, were given in exchange for the valuable pelts. To such traders, to certain selfish and designing settlers, and to some of the government agents, who have steadily driven the Indians back and back from wide prairie to a hunting ground, and then to a reservation, the red man owes much of the degradation and humiliation which overtook him.

As we look curiously at the straggling herds of buffalo, deer, and antelope in our parks and preserves to-day, we can scarcely realize how abundant was the game which the early hunters and trappers found roaming over the "Great American Desert." There is evidence of one herd of buffalo that made the earth brown for a stretch of country seventy miles long by thirty miles wide. On one of the first railroads to be laid across the plains of Kansas, a train was once held up for nine hours while a herd crossed the tracks. Both whites and

Indians slaughtered these vast herds carelessly and wantonly, using a variety of methods. A government report of 1875 speaks of one hundred thousand buffalo that were killed near Dodge City, Kansas. Only the saddles were used for food. The same report says: "It is known that south of the Arkansas River, west of Wichita, there were from one to two thousand men killing buffalo for hides alone." At one place on the south forks of the Republican River in 1874, there were six thousand and five hundred carcasses from which the hides had been stripped.

Towers for religious purposes, or medicine lodges, were built by the Indians with the horns of buffalo, antelope, and deer. Some of these towers were so high that they could be seen for many miles. Father De Smet speaks of seeing one of them from the Missouri River as he made his way westward in the year 1846. As a result of this enormous destruction of the herds, the hide markets became so glutted that the skins of bulls brought only one dollar, and the hides of cows and calves from forty to sixty cents each.

Just outside of the city of Fort Benton there was pointed out to Brother Van a famous cliff about one hundred and twenty feet high and rising sheer from the river. There the Indians were in the habit of killing buffalo by a method that is interesting if brutal. A fleet, active young man of the tribe would disguise himself as a buffalo by wearing a buffalo skin with the head attached. He was possessed also of a "Iuis Kini" (i uis-ki ni) or buffalo stone, which gave power to call buffalo. Before a run to a "falling place," he spent the night invoking the aid of the gods by burning sweet grass and sweet pine to draw the spirits. He purified himself by passing through the smoke of this fire.

When all was ready the buffalo hunter would attract the attention of the herd by strange antics, and then begin to call: "Hoo-hoo-hoo-ini-uh-ini-uh." Men and women concealed behind rocks began to yell; and the buffalo, terrified, ran with ever increasing speed toward the decoy, who led them toward the precipice. The herd, which might vary in number from one hundred and fifty to ten

thousand, would rush blindly forward and plunge over the wall to death in the shallow water beneath. The decoy would dodge into a crevice previously chosen in the edge of the cliff.

Brother Van had arrived in this interesting country of Indian exploits just before an eventful day, the Fourth of July. He was invited to the Fort as a guest of the non-commissioned officers. The Stars and Stripes fluttered over the rude barracks every day, but in the town the flag was displayed to show that it was a holiday. Wild scenes were enacted in the saloons, and Indians, who were waiting with their hard-earned furs, learned of the white man's "fire-water," which was used freely in the celebration.

Out in the stockade of the fort a feast was spread. The boat had brought bread and dried fruit, both of which were great delicacies. These, combined with the usual western fare, made a sumptuous repast. The western fare consisted of "jerked buffalo," which is simply dried buffalo meat, fresh antelope meat, a great delicacy even to the westerner, and the best dish of all, dried buffalo tongue.

Speeches were made and weird stories told of the warfare with the Indians. The eastern youth listened and wondered, and on that day he pondered over the subject of the red man's condition. Later he decided the matter in his own mind; he knew that the Indian had been more sinned against than sinning, and that the original American had been greatly misunderstood.

Those days of tarrying were fruitful days for William Van Orsdel. Not only were the cowboys and freighters won to friendship by his sympathy, but the Indians' confidence was gained. Friends, whose helpfulness was to last through his busy lifetime, became interested in him. Young Tatton, a tall, vigorous, fighting scout, a member of Company B of the Seventh Infantry, was one of the men who became one of Brother Van's fast friends in those days. He knew the West and understood its joys and privations thoroughly. He had noticed the new preacher as he faced the motley crowd that first day in Fort Benton. Though Tatton was a Roman Catholic, he admired the zeal which had found a way and a

place for religious services on the very day on which the missionary had set foot on the new soil. With leveled eyes the soldier scout had watched the crowd as they listened to that first earnest sermon of the eager newcomer, and to Brother Van he gave his support and a loyal and lasting friendship.

CHAPTER VI

A BROTHER TO THE BLACKFOOT

THE first strenuous days in Fort Benton, and the welcome he received there, might have convinced Brother Van that he had found a good place in which to settle. It was plain that his ministry was much needed and the prospects for a growing and useful work were bright. But he never forgot for a moment that he had taken the long journey from his Gettysburg home for the sake of serving among the Indians. Hence it is not surprising that within a week from that exciting morning when he had begun his Montana preaching career in the crowded barroom, we find him pushing on toward one of the agencies where he could more readily get in touch with the tribes. Again his attractive manner and his earnestness of purpose won for him a lift on his way, only this time he was to jolt over the rough prairie roads in a heavy wagon, instead of gliding smoothly along the Missouri.

The Regimental Adjutant from Fort Shaw had brought his wife into Fort Benton so that she might take passage on the return trip of the *Far West*. The Adjutant had met Brother Van, and learning of the missionary's desire to continue his journey to the West, had invited him to share the army wagon for the ride back to the post. The eager young traveler grasped this opportunity without delay. It did not take him long to stow away his baggage in the army conveyance, for his scanty wardrobe made only a small bundle. He took his place beside the Adjutant, and soon they were rumbling over the prairie toward Sun River settlement and Fort Shaw.

The gumbo was still sticky and tough from the rains of the previous days, and it was apparent from the first that there was to be a hard journey ahead. The five army mules drawing the wagon objected to the heavy traveling of the unbroken roads, and caused delays by their "objections." The driver's patience at last was exhausted, and in true western style he spoke to the errant beasts. Then he remembered that there was a preacher in the

wagon, and apologized for the language he had used. Brother Van showed himself to be a very human missionary, for he laughingly replied, "Why, bless your soul, you express my sentiments exactly, though I can't approve of your language."

Before dark a severe thunderstorm overtook the travelers, and the only shelter they could find was a lonely, deserted cabin. Here they spent the night, making the best of such comforts as were found in the government wagon. The coyotes sang a lonely song, and the prairie-dogs, their only neighbors, made vigorous protests against the intruders. This was the initiation of the tenderfoot preacher into the joys of overland journeying.

On the next day they reached Sun River where no church or schoolhouse existed; so again a place for Sunday service was sought, and a Christian home was found which was opened gladly for this unaccustomed use. Riders were sent out to all the settlements within reach, with the result that on the following day a fine congregation gathered in the frontier cabin. Carelessness about habits of

prayer and worship was common among these lonely people of the opening West. Brother Van's tender songs and warning words brought a genuine response from them.

After the service the travelers pushed on so that they might reach Fort Shaw by evening. At this place also, Brother Van immediately set about making arrangements to preach; and within a short time he had the soldiers of the garrison gathered about him, talking to them in a manly, helpful way that won their interest and their respect.

Tarrying but a day at Fort Shaw, he traveled with several companions north to the town of Chouteau, which was on the Teton River, and fifteen miles from the base of the Rocky Mountains. He hastened then to the Indian agency near there where the Blackfeet were settled. This tribe had migrated from Canada to the prairies of Montana, and it is interesting to know that they had been first called "Blackfeet" by the Flatheads and Shoshones, for when they had come to the end of their long journey, their moccasins were travel-stained and black.

On arriving at the agency, the missionary first made himself known to the officials and clerks and spoke to a group of them. They received him cordially and from the beginning of his stay he was given fresh confidence for his new work by the good will that they showed him. In his first meetings with the Indians the Blackfeet tribesmen listened to him stolidly and were apparently unmoved; but they caught the spirit of brotherhood in this pale-face preacher, and they soon began to show signs of their approval of him. Brother Van was happy indeed in the new opportunities opening before him, and in the increasing evidence that the Indians gave of their affection for him. He was fascinated by the strange life and mysterious customs which he found all about him. During his stay with the Blackfeet, and through later years, the missionary loved to study their ceremonies and legends.

One of the oldest institutions of the tribe was the building of the medicine lodge, a celebration which Brother Van followed with the keenest interest. It took place at the time of the ripening of berries in the summer, and

lasted through four days and nights. The lodge was always erected in fulfilment of a vow made by some woman of the tribe who was in trouble and who wished the help of the gods, perhaps to bring back in safety a husband or son away at war, or to restore a sick child to health. Her pledge was made publicly, so that all the tribe would know that she would build the lodge in case her prayer was granted. At the proper time the whole tribe would assemble and set up their lodges in a circle in the middle of which the medicine lodge was erected. The woman who had made the vow neither ate nor drank throughout the four days, except once only, and that in sacrifice. The other members of the tribe gave themselves over to visiting and feasting with their friends, and, also, to a strange kind of worship in which they tried to prove the sincerity of their prayers by torturing themselves in various painful ways.

The lodge was built in accordance with a plan which the Sun himself was supposed to have given to one of the young men of the tribe in ancient times. It represented the world,

and was made by placing small trees of uniform size in a circle, and bending the branches toward the center to form the roof. One half of it was painted red for the Sun, and the other half black to represent night. In recent years the medicine lodge is seldom used owing to the effect of modern education in destroying the superstitious beliefs of the Indians, and within another generation the ceremony will probably be extinct.

Brother Van also discovered that the tribal dances were not as simple as they had appeared to be, but that they were filled with hidden meanings, and that each had a history of its own. The story of the Pigeon Dance, which was one of those witnessed by the new missionary, shows the background of folk tales, dreams, and of the imitation of animal and bird life from which these dances grew. It is believed by the people that all of their dances originated in the dream of a seer of the tribe many generations ago. The custom was for some old man to go off into absolute seclusion out of sound of any human voice. He then subjected himself to various ceremonials, and



Board of Home Missions and Church Extension Methodist Episcopal Church,

**BROTHER VAN VISITING A MEDICINE LODGE ERRECTED AS A TRIBAL CEREMONY BY THE
BLACKFEET INDIANS**

becoming at last exhausted sought sleep and dreams. The process was continued until something new and unheard of was dreamed. The seeker for "something new under the sun" would then come back to the waiting tribe, and patiently wait and watch for his dream to come true. Not until he saw it in reality could he call the tribe together and proclaim the glad news.

Once upon a time an old man went away to a quiet spot and after the proper ceremonials fell asleep and the much desired dream came to him. He saw a flock of beautiful, many-colored pigeons and as they circled and whirled, he perceived that they were in truth executing a rhythmic dance. With grace and perfection of motion they performed wonderful and intricate figures. Their soft cooing made a weird and strange music which added to the charm of the mystical dances. The old man had dreamed the dream for which he longed. He came back to the tribe and said nothing, but he watched for the realization of the vision.

Eagerly he sought the nesting and feeding

places of pigeons. One day he actually saw the birds dancing as he had seen them in his dream. Immediately runners were sent forth to call the people together. A great feast was prepared at which the seer announced the vision that he had seen, and the manner in which the dance was conducted. On the American nation's birthday in the year 1917, this strange but beautiful dance was a part of the celebration at the Blackfeet Indian agency, and Brother Van, so long a friend of the Indians, was the guest of honor.

The missionary found that through their love of beauty and heroism the Indians had a peculiar understanding and appreciation of Bible history. There was much in their simple, wandering life that made them feel a close kinship with those shepherds, hunters, and warriors of the ancient East. They had passed through the same great human experiences, and they shared many of the same beliefs. In their crude and faltering way they, too, looked up to a Great Spirit who made all things and upon whose bounty all men depend. As they told Brother Van their tribal

legends, he was struck by the remarkable resemblance which many of these bore to some of the stories of the Bible. The Blackfeet story of the forming of the world is peculiarly interesting because it shows the belief which they have in a Creator.

"In the beginning there was water everywhere. A raft was floating on which Old Man (the Sun) and all the animals were gathered. Old Man wished to make land. He sent the beaver to the bottom of the water to bring up mud. The beaver never reached the bottom. The loon was tried and he failed. The otter made the perilous journey and failed. At last the muskrat was sent down. He was gone so long that Old Man thought he was drowned. Finally he came up and floated almost dead. He was pulled on top of the raft, and as they looked at his paws, they found a little mud on them. Old Man dried this mud and scattered it over the water, and land was formed.

"Old Man then began to make the earth to suit him. He marked places for rivers to run. Sometimes the rivers ran smoothly and sometimes with falls. He made mountains,

prairies, and timber. He carried a lot of rocks around with him, and of these he made mountains. He caused grass to grow on the plains for the animals to feed upon. He marked certain pieces of land where berries should grow; others where camas should grow; others for wild carrots and turnips, and others for service-berries, bull-berries, and rosebuds.

“He made the Big Horn sheep and put it on the prairie, but it was awkward and slow; so he put it on the rough hills, and it skipped about. While Old Man was in the mountains he made the antelope. It ran so fast that it hurt itself; so he put it on the plains and said, ‘This is the place that will suit you.’

“At last he decided to make a woman and a child. He modeled clay in human shape and laid the forms on the ground and said, ‘You shall be people.’ After four days they were changed and he said, ‘Stand up and walk.’ They walked to the river and the woman said, ‘Shall we live forever?’ Old Man said, ‘I had not thought of that. We must decide. I’ll throw this buffalo chip in the water. If it floats, people shall live after being dead for

four days. If it sinks, that shall be the end of them.'

"He threw the chip. It floated. The woman said, 'No, I will throw this stone into the water. If it floats, we shall live always; if it sinks, people must die.' The rock sank. Old Man said, 'You have chosen. That will be an end to them.' By and by the child died and the woman wanted to change the law, but Old Man answered, 'What is made law must be law.'

"At first people had claws like bears so that they might gather roots and berries. There were buffalo which killed and ate people. Old Man said, 'I'll change this. From this day on the people shall eat buffalo.' So he cut some service-berry shoots and peeled them; then he took a flat piece of wood and tied strips of green hide to it and made a bow. On one end of each light, straight shoot, he tied a chip of hard stone, and on the other end he put a feather. He gave them to the men, saying, 'Take these the next time you go among buffalo. Shoot as I have taught you.'

"When the arrows first struck the buffalo, it called out, 'Oh, my friends, a great fly is bit-

ing me.' After the buffalo had been killed, Old Man saw his people eat the raw flesh. 'I will show you something better,' said he. He gathered soft, dried, rotten wood. He took another piece of wood and rapidly drilled a hole in it with an arrow-head. A tiny flame soon sprang up from which he kindled a big fire and showed his children how to roast the meat."

The history of the forming of the Blackfeet Indian tribe is also very quaint, and it could not but have an especial appeal to Brother Van, for from his early youth his life had been one to encourage clean living. The story tells how one brave looked with disfavor upon the tribal vices and misdemeanors, and strove to bring the members into a finer, cleaner way of living. His own life was pure and good, and his people recognized this, but they would not heed his pleadings. Finally, he went off into the silence of the plains to communicate with the Great Spirit. He told of his desire for his people: that they should all be pure and strong; that the maidens should be contented; that they should dwell in a land where game abounded, and where wars should never come.

From this great spiritual leader the Blackfeet tribe was said to have descended.

As Brother Van pursued his work among his beloved Indians, they became more and more attached to him. Like the white residents, they, too, accepted their kind-hearted visitor as a brother. This tie deepened with the years in which he was known to them, and in time a great honor came to him. He was adopted into the tribe, and with a picturesque ceremony he was received into their circle and given a new name, Amahk-Us-Ki-Tsi-Pahk-Pa, which means "Great Heart" or "Big Heart." There was a tribute in the meaning of those queer syllables which any man might be proud to win—especially from people of a different race. At the same time he received a gift of a new and beautiful tribal costume from them. It is Brother Van's custom to visit the Blackfeet every year on the Fourth of July when he wears his Indian costume and celebrates the nation's birthday with his Indian brothers.

With the progress of his work on the agency, Brother Van's indignation was aroused by the injustice and oppression dealt to the red man.

As he witnessed the system of trading, he came to see with ever increasing clearness, that the Indians would never have the necessary opportunities for progress and development unless the white man, and the white man's government, could be brought to deal fairly and justly with these original inhabitants of the plains. The very future of the Indian race he saw to be at stake. "What is the use," he asked himself, "of teaching and training these people when diseases caused by contact with the white man's civilization are threatening their existence, and when their living is being taken from them by the settlement of their lands?"

The problem which confronted the missionary has been put briefly in a more recent time by Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the Hon. Cato Sells, who says, "Before you educate the Indian you must save his life." As Brother Van faced the misery, the disease, and the ignorance among them, he decided that even to save the Indians' lives, to say nothing of winning them to Christ, it would be necessary to lead the white people to change their ways. How could he continue to try to convert and



Board of Home Missions and Church Extension Methodist Episcopal Church,

THE PICTURESQUE CEREMONY OF ADOPTION INTO THE BLACKFEET TRIBE

educate the Indians, when the Indians could see very plainly that the white preacher's brothers were very much in need of the same kind of teaching?

Gradually Brother Van's resolution was formed—he must give his first attention to establishing churches in the new towns that the white settlers were building. It meant giving up the life among the people he had come to serve, and who already had shown many encouraging signs of response to his preaching. His decision led him away from his new friends and back among his own race, but he continued to come into contact with the Indians from time to time. His sympathy with them and his understanding of their habits helped him to teach them successfully. Through the years he proved himself to be "Great Heart," a brother to the Blackfoot.

CHAPTER VII

THE GOSPEL TEAM

THE unfriendly conditions which Brother Van found growing between the Indians and the whites led later to the Custer Massacre. While in the missionary's mind there was no expectation of such a serious climax, yet he saw that the idea of a real brotherhood of man must be given as quickly as possible to the traders, miners, ranchmen, and settlers. Through their better understanding of Christ's religion the Indian through example would be led to know the white man's God.

It was a fresh quest that made Brother Van set out for Helena, which was then a comparatively large settlement. The town was in the proximity of the gold mine called Last Chance Gulch. This mine has an interesting history. Prospectors had been for long,

weary months at Silver Creek, which was twelve or thirteen miles from where Helena now stands. Luck had been against them, and they packed their horses and came down the trail disheartened and "broke." They resolved to give up the search and go home. Coming into Helena in the evening, they made camp close to the tiny town, intending to leave early on the following day.

On the next morning the horses were loaded, and everything was in readiness for the start, when the unquenchable faith of the prospector moved John Cowan to take up a pick and to make one more attempt to find ore.

"Well, boys, here's our last chance," he said, carelessly, as he drove his pick into the ground.

He struck gold. From that mine fifty to eighty million dollars' worth of gold was taken. The words of the lucky prospector always stuck to the section, and it was called Last Chance Gulch. The mine was five miles long and the vein two hundred feet wide. One nugget was free from quartz, and was worth two thousand and seventy-three dollars. Last Chance Gulch has a thrilling record. Scenes

of adventure and death took place there. Men made vast fortunes. Other men lost all that they had and went away broken in spirit. Gamblers won and lost; prospectors failed; but always Last Chance paid in gold.

Entering Helena to-day, you will find a thriving, bustling city, proud of one of the finest hotels in the Northwest. The hotel stands on the spot where the miner stuck in his pick. Enough gold was found in the soil to pay for the excavation, and this was taken from the "tailings," or discarded earth handled by the early miners. But Helena was a typical mining town when the Eastern tenderfoot came. He was at the mercy of the hard element. Only the rare good judgment and a sense of the fitness of things saved the preacher and made his ministrations possible.

Brother Van made a short stay there, and then, as a missionary to "everywhere," he pressed on to Bozeman. There he found the only Methodist Church building in Montana Territory. It was a brick church and it had been built through the enterprise of the Rev. Thomas C. Iliff. This missionary was a great

force in the new West. He brought a dainty, cultured, Eastern bride to the unsettled territory. Through the inspiration of her companionship and tactful assistance, together with his own natural courage and ability, he became a notable power for good in the development of the West.

Dr. Iliff had come to Helena in Eastern finery, and appeared on the streets adorned with an immaculate linen frock coat, fancy vest, striped trousers, and silk hat. As he came along the streets, cries of "Fresh fish! Fresh fish!" greeted him. The silk hat seemed particularly to annoy the deriding miners who closed in around the preacher. His fighting blood was up, and the new preacher continued his way, apparently undaunted by the jeers of the crowd. But early next morning he stole forth to a hatter's and purchased a wide-brimmed hat, which style of hat, by the way, he wore to the day of his death. With the aid of the obliging haberdasher, the silk hat was wrapped to resemble a joint of stove-pipe and it afterward became a relic of by-gone splendor. Brother Van and the hero of the tall hat

story became fast friends, and had many an adventure together in the years of roughing it that followed.

A pony had been given to Brother Van during his visit at Helena. He was now in reality a circuit-rider, and as he became familiar on the plains, he and his steed began to be known everywhere as the "Gospel Team." They traveled through a large section of the state and when the anniversary of Brother Van's arrival in Montana came, it was an experienced preacher who celebrated it. Such a wonderful year it had been! Hardships were forgotten in the triumphs, for many "first services" had been conducted, and scores of "first members" had been received. The year had brought friends, and his faithful pony seemed to be a real partner in service. Into the preacher's pocketbook had gone exactly seventy-five dollars as the year's salary, but there was no thought of quitting because of the lack of stipend. The West had called him and had claimed him.

On the day that marked the end of his first year in Montana, Brother Van received from

the Conference an appointment as Junior Preacher to the Rev. F. A. Riggin. The appointment read: "To Beaver Head and Jefferson District."

Virginia City in the southwest corner of the state was the center of this circuit. Beaver Head, Madison River, and Salmon City, one hundred and fifty miles away, were its three points. Montana had been set off from Idaho and erected into a separate territory in May, 1864. Brother Van's circuit, therefore, extended across the Rocky Mountains into Idaho as far as Salmon City. The region provided variety in its characteristics. There were lonely trails to travel over for the pony and Brother Van, and for his co-worker, Mr. Riggin. There were only eighteen members of the church in all that large region. The junior and senior preachers so arranged their work that one man took care of the regular appointments while the other did the evangelistic work. By this plan a continuous series of evangelistic meetings was held for seven months. At the end of their first year in the district, seven new societies had been organized, and one hundred

and fifty new members received into the church.

Among the long rides which the Gospel Team took was one to the town of Butte. In describing the occasion Brother Van remarked dryly: "We had all but ten of the whole town in our congregation on that first night." This would be a remarkable statement if it were made to-day; but at that time the population of Butte was exactly fifty people. The city is now the most important railway center in the state. It has been called the "greatest mining camp in the world." Brother Van's visit was at the very beginning of the history of what is now a city of great interest to America.

When the snow cleared away the Gospel Team penetrated to the National Park, and one day on coming into the Upper Yellowstone Valley, Brother Van found a large congregation waiting. One man said: "If a herd of wild buffalo had run through the streets of St. Louis it could not have caused more comment than that a preacher had come to the Yellowstone." The National Park was then but a year old, and the grandeur of the "Wonder-



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Painting by Charles M. Russell.

INDIANS WERE EVERYWHERE STEALING HORSES AND TERRIFYING SETTLERS

land of America" was beginning to be appreciated. It was in the famous place of geysers, deep canyons, and waterfalls, where nature had combined many influences to produce the beauty of the surrounding scene, that Brother Van conducted the first Protestant religious service held in the new park. The missionary continued to go about steadily from section to section and at the close of his five years of work in Montana as missionary to everywhere, he received the appointment of local deacon. It was just about the date of this recognition, that the trouble brewing between the Indians and the white men developed into the Indian wars.

The settlers lived in small isolated communities. Some of the pioneers had seized the opportunity to return east to visit their old homes while the Centennial Exhibition was in progress in Philadelphia in the year 1876. In the spring of that year gold had been discovered in the Black Hills of Dakota, an almost unknown region girt around by what is known as Bad Lands, or "Medicine Country," as the Indians called it. At once there was a rush of

miners out of Montana to the new fields. This move helped to reduce the white population. A spirit of rebellion had been steadily rising in the minds of the red men until it reached the open hostility soon to give to American history the fearful story of the Custer Massacre.

The Indians objected so strongly to the intrusion of prospectors and others into their territory, that they sent Red Cloud and Spotted Tail to Washington to protest, because the coming of the white men into that region was a clear violation of existing treaties. The government promised to keep prospectors out, but failed to do so. The Indians then demanded payment for their lands. The government sent a commission which reported that force would be the only way to settle the dispute. The Indians also decided that this was their only method of protest. It had been seen that the first meetings worked no advantage to either side, but served only to anger both Indians and whites. A message was sent by the United States government to Sitting Bull, who had gathered all the warriors around him in the Big Horn country. He was ordered to return

to the Reservation, or the United States would make war on his people. He sent this reply: "When you come for me you need bring no guides. You will easily find me. I shall be right here. I shall not run away."

He kept his promise. The Indians took their allowance from the United States government and bought bullets and guns. They gathered along the Rosebud and Little Big Horn rivers and among the hills and valleys between. They were led by Rain-in-the-Face while their real leader, Sitting Bull, was absent making medicine.

The United States troops in the western States had concentrated in their efforts to check the rebellion. General Custer was in command of the cavalry under General Terry. Scouts brought word that a band of Indians were riding rapidly to join the main body. They were supposed to be Pawnees, and numbering not more than twelve hundred. General Custer was sent to surround the camp. He divided his men into three companies as he prepared a well-planned attack. Major Reno was to ride directly across, but was to wait one

hour to allow Major Benteen's detachment to go up the river, cross it, and so be above the camp. The tactics did not allow for the hard traveling which Major Benteen found, nor for the great force of hostile Indians.

At the end of the hour of waiting, Major Reno attacked and was so completely overcome and dismayed at the strength of the Indians, that he fled to the bluffs. Major Benteen arrived at last, but saw that he could do nothing, so he joined the retreat. This left General Custer at the place which he had selected with two hundred men to face an infuriated band of Indians numbering five thousand. When Custer saw the size of the Indian army, he sent a scout to the retreating men in the hills, saying, "Come on, big village, be quick, bring packs." He meant by packs the extra powder and bullets. With their horrible war-cry the Indians bore down on the little handful of men, who soon saw that there was nothing to do but to fight and die.

General Custer saw every one of his men mutilated and scalped, and he stood at last alone. He received seven wounds before he

fell. The onrushing Indians were abashed and astonished at such bravery; not a rough hand was laid on Custer's body, and no tomahawk tore into the hero's scalp. On the next day Major Reno and Major Benteen were followed by the Indians and attacked as they prepared to make their last stand. But these enemies saw the rest of the white men approaching under Generals Terry and Gibbon and quickly fled.

On the twenty-seventh day of June, the bodies of General Custer and his brave men were buried. A monument marks the spot where they fell, and all America honors the courage that the handful of men displayed on that summer day. Another people honor those dead. The Sioux Indians look upon General Custer as a god because of his bravery. His memory is honored and loved among them, and they call him the "Evening Star."

In *Lives of Famous Indian Chiefs*, N. B. Wood says that there were two survivors of Custer's last stand, Curley, the Crow scout, who put on a Sioux blanket and escaped, and the horse Comanche, the famous war horse of

Captain Keogh. He was found bleeding from seven wounds, and was carried back by soldiers on a litter of blankets and poles. Comanche recovered and lived to the age of forty-five, while few horses reach the age of thirty-five. His skin was stuffed and is now in the museum of the Kansas State University.

This massacre at Little Big Horn, now so memorable a part of American history, threw a gloom over the whole nation. The New York *Tribune* on July 3, 1876, said: "It is the eve of Independence Day, the Centennial Fourth. All the land is ablaze with enthusiasm. Alas! if the tidings of General Custer's terrible disaster could be borne on the wings of the four winds, dirges, not anthems would be heard in the streets of Philadelphia, New York, and San Francisco.

"A great shadow has fallen on the valley of the Big Horn. The youngest of our guard, the *beau sabreur* of the Army of the Potomac, the golden-haired chief whom the Sioux had learned to love, has fought his last fight. Surrounded by over two hundred and fifty brothers in arms, Custer lies buried in the field where

he fought, and fought until he could fight no longer."

But this serious situation of the Indian uprisings did not end with this calamity which is referred to commonly as the Custer Massacre, and Brother Van had a full share of the dangers. Later the wars came into his territory.

CHAPTER VIII

SCOUTING FOR UNCLE SAM

GREAT excitement prevailed throughout the West over the rebellion of the Indians. The effect of the disturbances was felt increasingly severely in the district between Bannack and Sheridan. The Nez Percés Indians had long dwelt in the beautiful and fertile Wallowa Valley in Oregon. They resented the new treaty and fled into Montana from the soldiers sent to force them into the reservations. They were accustomed to the trails through Idaho and over the mountains as they had often come to Montana to camp and to hunt buffalo. This tribe had become known as the Nez Percés (nose pinched) Indians because they wore rings in their noses when Lewis and Clark found them during their western explorations. It is claimed by some members of the tribe that this

was a mistake and that wearing nose rings had never been a custom of theirs.

The Nez Percés were a peaceful people and it was this tribe that had sent the delegation to find the "White Man's Book of Heaven." They had remembered the white man's religion during the twenty-five years after the visit of those early explorers and the time of the pilgrimage of their leaders to St. Louis. They were eager to know the true religion and had often disputed about it among themselves. Some members of the tribe held that the white man worshiped the sun, as he had pointed to the sky when he spoke to them of God. They knew that the book would tell them the truth.

One of the religious ceremonies of the Nez Percés was the sun-dance. A pole was set up in the center and the people circled about it. The priest stood in the center of the circle and held up a fish, berries, or some other food and said, "Oh! Father bless the fish. Oh! Father bless us." The phrase varied, of course, with the food thus held to the sun. Every one would chant the words after him with their heads bowed to the ground.

The resentment of these peaceful and worshipful, but now rebellious Indians showed itself in their acts of defiance. The settlements were greatly disturbed. Stories of wanton raids on the settlers were borne back and forth as the swift riders galloped over the prairies. Stockades were made for the protection of the women and children. Miners, ranchmen, and settlers were all engrossed in the one big object of protecting the lives of the scattered whites, and of saving the property so dearly bought by their daring and toil.

Thus Brother Van found a new job. He gave his services to his country, and, still preaching, singing, and cheering sad hearts, he became war scout for General O. O. Howard, who had been put in command of the troops sent to quell the Indian uprising. Only indecisive battles were fought. The Indians were not quieted, but were fired to further violence. Still resenting the presence of the whites on the plains, and still failing to appreciate the protection of the Great White Father at Washington, they were moved to many acts of violence under such indomitable leaders as Chief

Joseph, Looking Glass, and White Bird to command their movements.

The town of Bannack was built on Grass-hopper Creek where gold was discovered in 1862. It was the first capital after the region became a territory and it was there in December, 1864, that the first legislature met and divided the new territory into counties.

Fear of the Indians was so intense in Bannack that the town was picketed, and volunteers were on the lookout at night. Brother Van was preaching to a large congregation in the courthouse and guards watched the building in which he spoke.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

"Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence."

These were the words with which the preacher sought to quiet the alarm in the hearts of the waiting people. At daybreak a swift

rider came into town and one arm dangled as he rode. Then came another rider who brought the message, "Indians are devastating and killing as they come and many of the settlers are being killed."

A quick consultation followed in the grey dawn. Fifteen men volunteered and the missionary scout was among them. Melvin Trask was elected captain of the volunteer band. When all were ready a woman came and asked to be allowed to accompany them, for her husband, Mr. Winter, was on the plains at the mercy of the invaders. The company absolutely refused to allow her to go, and she was put under the guard of some neighbors that she might be protected.

The party set forth with grim, set faces and had proceeded about twelve miles when they heard a rider approaching from the rear. On guard and alert against possible surprise, they were astonished on looking back to see Mrs. Winter, who soon rode into their circle. Declaring that no power on earth could keep her from her husband, she had mounted the splendid horse which was her own particular proper-

ty, and now joined the party of volunteers. They rode until they reached her home. At the front door lay the body of a man with four bullet wounds in his head, and on opening the door, Mrs. Winter found the body of her husband's partner, Mr. Montague. Mr. Winter could not be found in the house, so the party started to search the grounds. By the side of the house they found the body of a Mr. Smith, and further on discovered a ranchman named Farnsworth and to him were able to give comfort in his dying moments.

Two scouts now set out to find Mr. Winter. As they departed, the Nez Percés warriors returned to the scene of devastation, and the little band of volunteers was forced to ride rapidly toward Bannack, firing as they went. This left the scouts alone at the mercy of the Indians. Crawling when they must, running when they could, they evaded the Indians and came at last to a protected section, where they were able to make real progress. Here they met the retreating party and the glad meeting was just over, when to their wondering eyes appeared a blood-stained, disheveled, white

man. Mrs. Winter recognized her husband, and their joyous reunion took place on the sheltered road.

Cautiously the anxious riders turned back to the Winter ranch. The Indians had again departed. A wagon was found that could be used, though the devastating hands of the Indians had touched, not only the house, but all the property of the ranchman. The four bodies were tenderly lifted and taken to Bannack for Christian burial. That funeral is a sacred hour in Montana history. General Howard's scout, Brother Van, was the preacher. The terrified people gathered in a great sobbing congregation. The isolation of the settlers gave them a feeling of desolation that was disheartening. These four bodies were evidences of the murderous intent of the red men; surely a large task was set for Brother Van in helping the terror-stricken on that day.

The services began and the preacher in his own quieting way talked to the living, for hope was his vital breath. Comfort began to steal over the waiting throng, when lo, a messenger appeared at the church door.

He said, "The Indians are again approaching Bannack."

The service came to an abrupt close, for those in attendance hastened home to protect children and property. All was in confusion. The men gathered in consultation. They decided that word of the new attack must be taken to General Howard, who was coming toward the scene and was even then but twelve miles away.

Again volunteers were called for. Once more Brother Van offered his services and with John Poindexter set out for help. They rode through Indian country, and evading every danger, came at last to the detachment of the regular army. They found the soldiers in sore straits, for the long march through Idaho had been most disheartening. Communications with the East were cut, and they were compelled to live on such scant forage as the country provided. The infantry was without shoes and the cavalry was tired out with long marches in a mountainous country. On hearing of the danger that threatened Bannack, General Howard dispatched a company of

cavalry for the town's protection. He then spoke to the two hardy, seasoned scouts who had come to him for help, and asked of them a great service. He told them of the scantiness of his supplies. He explained the importance of sending information to Washington concerning the serious situation, and asked them if they would be his messengers to the nearest point of communication with the government.

"We are at our country's service," was their instant reply.

So, in the lonely watches of the night, John Poindexter and Brother Van started on another errand of mercy. As they left the camp they could hear the hoot of the owl and the yelp of the coyote—sounds that were plaintive and saddening at any time, but to these two scouts they were now full of deadly meaning. They knew that the hoot and the yelp were signals given by watching Indians.

As silently as possible they moved, going directly to the south, and as they journeyed the calls grew indistinct, and at last were heard no more. The scouts relaxed slightly, for their confidence was somewhat regained. Suddenly

are as follows:
Logan, Lieutenant Bradley,
17 men, and 5 citizens.
Gen. Gibbon, Capt. Williams,
olidge, Woodruff and English,
usly, besides 36 men and 4

suffered severely, as 40 dead
ounted on about one-half the

arrived and would pursue the
as his command arrived.
on would move to Deer Lodge
ounded to Fort Shaw, as soon
nd transportation arrived.
had disappeared, in which
yet learned.

Final List of the Killed.

EE, August 13.—The following
as far as learned, of the killed
ght in the Big Hole on the 9th,
eventu Infantry was engaged:
A. Logan and Lient. Bradley;
Shaw scout named Bostwick;
rgeant Hogan, Corporal Mc-
ivate Britz; Company G—Ser-
th, Sergeant Martin, Corporal
l O'Connor, and private
ny K—Sergeant Stortz.
could give no further names.

THE RELIEF.

th Surgeons, Nurses, Stores,
ed by the Volunteers,
Heard From.

rough on Horse Prairie, killing the Pierce
Brothers and others on the route. They are
evidently making their way to Snake River
Valley. (Signed)

BRAY.
TRANK.
GRAVES.
BATCHELDER.

FROM BANNACK.

The Exposed Settlers Being Killed.

The Beaverhead People Under Arms

[SPECIAL TO THE HERALD.]

BANNACK CITY, M. T.,
4 o'clock a. m., August 13, 1877.

Great excitement here. Several settlers
were killed on Horse Prairie last evening
about sundown. Mr. Hamilton, just in from
there, reports seeing 300 Indians with a band
of 2,000 horses. They appear to be moving
towards Lemhi. The whole band appear to
have come from the Big Hole trail.

The men here are all under arms. Women
and children are quartered in the Court House.

W. W. VAN ORSDALE.

**The Savages' Work on Horse
Prairie.**

People Killed and Stock
Driven off.

A Dozen or More Victims
Already Reported.

in the dim dawn twelve warriors loomed up before them. No shots could be fired. The party was small and a shot would but call other waiting Indians to their assistance. General Howard must not be drawn into needless battle, for his men and horses were suffering for lack of rest. The horses which the scouts were riding were fresh and spirited; so, giving spur and riding in furious haste, the two messengers outdistanced the Indians, leaving them and the immediate danger far behind.

At last the scouts reached the stage road, and rode without interruption to a station. Here the precious message to Washington was put in the hands of Uncle Sam's postmen, who drove the stage-coaches amid such peril and hardship, carrying passengers and letters across the "Great American Desert." Their duty accomplished, Brother Van and his companion returned to the seat of war. They found Bannack ready for a siege. Captain Bell was in charge of the company of regulars, and there were also two companies of Montana Volunteers from Butte under the command of Major W. A. Clark.

When the excitement over their safe return had subsided, Brother Van again turned his attention toward the church. The town was full of people and their need of solace was great. A church building had been started but the Indian wars had halted the work. The missionary scout determined to finish the church and he found that everybody wanted to help; soldiers, settlers, and cowboys went at the building with hearty good will. The little church was thus very speedily completed, and on a beautiful Sabbath Day another of Brother Van's first enterprises was dedicated to the Lord.

What the helpful presence of the preacher-scout meant to the distressed townspeople in those trying days is shown by a dispatch sent from Bannack to the *Helena Herald*, August, 1877. The correspondent reported: "Word also has just arrived that there is a load of guns and ammunition within fifteen miles of us; an escort has just gone out to meet it. News also comes that Joe Metlin is on his way from Glendale with a company of volunteers for our protection, and that he will arrive in a few hours.

It is now midnight, and every now and then some one keeps coming in, so that if we get the guns here by morning we will be in better shape. The Rev. Van Orsdel is here doing duty as a volunteer. He is a whole man. God bless all good men of whatever creed."

A successful work in this community seemed ahead of the scout-missionary. A common fear had drawn the people closely together and nearer to their knowledge of a protecting God. But another work was given to Brother Van and fresh adventures shortly presented themselves.

CHAPTER IX

NEW TRAILS

WHILE danger of the Indian attacks was still hanging over Bannack and the other settlements, new orders came to William Van Orsdel. A Conference in session at St. Louis had heard an account of the young missionary's work; and these wise men seeing how rapidly Montana was developing made plans for the extension of the work of the church in new fields. Their maps showed them a great unsettled section beyond the mountains known as the Bitter Root Valley. It would be a hard piece of work and no tenderfoot could be sent to open up that section. There was but one man for the new frontier, and obediently, Brother Van took a last look at the tiny church just dedicated and bade farewell to the people of Bannack.

The ride before the missionary covered a distance of about one hundred and fifty miles

through the country where the Indians were carrying on their warfare with the soldiers. The trail which he followed was the very one taken by Lewis and Clark in September, 1805, on their way to the Pacific Coast. The explorers had been most hospitably received by the Indians, whom they found encamped at Ross Hole. They greeted the "white gods" with all the awe of their simple natures and a feast and formal council was held in their honor. They called the newcomers "So-Yap-Po," meaning "the crowned ones," because they wore round hats or caps.

As Brother Van and his pony traveled through the historic country, sometimes the long grass would reach to the horse's head on each side of the trail; then stretches of barren and rocky ground with patches of sage brush would be reached, and again they would come suddenly to steep-banked creeks hidden in the tall grass. The road led up through the pass, now called Gibbon Pass, but the tragic encounter which gave it that name had but recently taken place.

When Chief Joseph, the leader of the Nez

Percés Indians, fully realized that the United States troops had been sent to drive him and his band from their valley, he determined to migrate to Canada. The troops were in hot pursuit, and finding all direct routes cut off, the Indians came east through Lo Lo Pass into Montana. At Stevensville they paid for all supplies purchased and gave notice that all that they wanted was to go on their journey unmolested. When the soldiers in search of assembled Indians heard at Stevensville about Chief Joseph's party, they gave chase and a number of residents of the place joined them.

The Indians camped at Big Hole and the soldiers, under command of General Gibbon, suddenly found themselves close to the camp one night. They could hear the sound of Indian voices; so one of the soldiers climbed a tree and was horrified to see a great many camp-fires burning. Precautions were taken at once and no camp-fires were kindled by the white troops. Hard bread had to be their only fare, a not very substantial food for their need in the fighting on the following eventful day, August 9, 1877.

When dawn was beginning to push back the shadows of the night, an Indian herder came out to look after the ponies; he stumbled over the waiting soldiers. The alarm was given immediately and the herder was shot and killed. Instantly all was in confusion. Braves forgot their guns and fled; ponies broke bounds and ran wild; dogs barked; but the Indians reformed rapidly and the battle was on. It lasted all day and the Indians fought like demons. They captured the only cannon and two thousand rounds of ammunition. They set fire to the grass in which the troops had hid so that the soldiers were nearly suffocated at first, but the wind changed and the smoke blew in the red men's faces. The troops were cheered by this turn in their favor, and fought bravely and desperately, although they had been so long without proper food or sleep.

Suddenly the firing ceased. A captured man had told the Indians that more "walking soldiers" were coming. Fearing to be utterly destroyed the Indians fled, leaving eighty-nine dead men on the battle-field. Chief Joseph was compelled to surrender when only eighty

miles from the Dominion line where strategic measures were used. In his desperate attempt for freedom, and by the record of his later life, he gained the high esteem of the United States government for his lofty character. His people had honorable intentions but they found it hard to submit to the conquering white man.

As Brother Van reached Big Hole on his way to Missoula a scene of horror greeted his eyes. The bodies of the lately fallen heroes had been hurriedly buried, for another Indian attack was impending. A storm had followed which made the earth so soft that the prowling wild beasts of the plains had exhumed the bodies of the brave men and were devouring them. The missionary halted in his journey and sent a messenger to Fort Missoula, which was then in course of erection. From there a company of men was sent immediately to care for the bodies, which were taken back to the church for a public funeral. So Brother Van came for his first service in the new district into a scene of sorrow and distress. Hearts were tender over the loss of these men and to the waiting people he spoke words of comfort



Courtesy of the American Bureau of Ethnology.

CHIEF JOSEPH, LEADER OF THE NEZ PERCÉS AT THE BATTLE OF
BIG HOLE

as he committed the bodies to the earth. After scenes of terror and bereavement it is not surprising that a great revival followed, and the new preacher was again able to find "first members" for "first churches" in that great section where the dread of the Indians' fury was always present.

Missoula was the center chosen for the frontier district where Brother Van was to preach and teach the people. Its name in the Indian language means "a place of fear" or "at the stream of surprise or ambush." The town, which is near the mouth of Hell Gate Canyon, is now a great distributing point for a farming region and is the site of the State university. The little church in the settlement of Missoula had been built by Brother Van's friend, Dr. Iliff, who had been stationed there previously for a short period.

Through the busy years spent at Virginia City and Bannack, these two friends had met and labored frequently together. The experiences of one holiday journey which they took make a story well worth repeating. Dr. Iliff, his young bride, and Brother Van drove

to Salt Lake City, where the Rocky Mountain Conference was held in 1875. Although attendance at the Conference was necessary, their journey was an outing for them and gave them an opportunity to see civilization once more. The Presiding Elder had a buggy, and in this the three friends made the memorable trip. They drove through the wide, dusty prairie and over the mountains, for they had to cross the main range of the Rockies. Each night camp was made, and the little wife officiated at the jolly supper which effaced all memory of the weary traveling.

The twilight hours were the moments when the ties of friendship were strengthened, and the youthful spirits of the campers prompted many pranks and contests. As they camped near Idaho Falls one evening the sport was to determine which could catch the largest trout. This story will never have a satisfactory ending, for, being a fish story, each caught the largest, and, of course, no bride could decide against her husband. The Sabbath days of the outing were taken by the travelers as rest days for the horses, and as refreshing times for their

own souls. They reached Salt Lake City in good season, and found Bishop Haven presiding over the Conference, and Brother Van's old friend, Chaplain McCabe, singing his way into the hearts of the people.

Conference Sunday came with a rousing sermon by the Bishop. The sermon over, these two friends felt a longing to explore. Like culprits they stole away in the afternoon and sought the great Mormon tabernacle. They gazed in wonder at the huge building with its queer arched roof which gave the whole structure the appearance of an inverted soup tureen; then they ventured farther to see how it looked on the inside. As usual the Mormons were gathering for their great Sunday service, and the two guests from Montana sat down to listen to the famous Mormon leader, Brigham Young. The building seats twelve thousand people and every seat was filled.

After hearing a sermon sharply in contrast with what they had heard from their own bishop, the curiosity of these Westerners was not satisfied, so they tarried to examine the building and its surroundings. When deepen-

ing twilight warned them that the time for departure was at hand, they sought the entrance gate, but lo, the bars were down and no watchful attendant was there, either to punish the intruders or to let them out.

Brother Van and Dr. Iliff stood and looked at each other and then at the high iron fence. Had they come from scenes of Indian troubles and the hardships of the wide plains to be daunted by such an obstacle as an iron gate? Off came preachers' coats. Hats were flung high over the fence and two agile pioneer ministers climbed over that formidable barrier and dropped down to earth. Then coats and hats were donned, and again these inquisitive friends continued their investigating tour.

They found themselves walking along Brigham Street on which stood Amelia Palace, the residence erected for Young's favorite wife. As they looked at the building interestedly, they saw the Mormon leader himself pacing the walk and followed by two wives. Again the spirit of adventure prompted them and they dared each other to cross the street, speak to, and shake hands with the august leader of

Mormonism. No sooner said than done. In a moment the two men were bowing and introducing themselves as Methodist preachers from the West, and proffering eager hands. Brigham Young looked at them with an amused twinkle in his eyes, and cordially shook hands, saying, "I certainly am glad to shake hands with you. I was a Methodist once myself!"

The friendship of these two young missionaries in the new West grew deeper and sweeter with the passing days in their work in Montana. At one time they held united revival services at Virginia City. They rode into the town unannounced and proceeded to seek a place where they might hold meetings. The old opera house was secured and there they began their preaching and singing. The people attended out of curiosity at first, but a real earnestness came with the passing days, and many were started on the way toward living a new, clean life.

Billy Blay was one of the men who left off his evil habits. The evangelists had heard of this notorious drunkard. They went to his hut with its dirt roof and floor where the poor

sot was huddled in his blankets. They talked with him about other ways of living, and prayed with him. He promised to come to church, and to the amazement of the townspeople, Billy Blay not only kept his promise, but he came sober. During the services he was saved from his sins and took a fresh start in life. After realizing that his sins would be forgiven, he said, "Give me pen and paper. I want to write to my wife and children in Wisconsin."

That Billy Blay could write was astonishing to the people of the town, who knew him only as a notorious drunkard. Now he wrote like an educated man. While he waited for an answer to the letter which broke a twelve years' silence, he gave himself into the care of Brother Van and Dr. Iliff. He had great natural ability, and he spoke to others about his new experience so effectively that he was at last given an exhorter's license and made a third member of the evangelistic group.

After a little time Billy Blay heard from his wife. She was ill, and had believed him to be dead. Money for his journey back home was

raised in the two institutions of the town that knew him, the church and the saloon, and the family was reunited. This new preacher gave his life to missionary work in a logging-camp in Wisconsin, making another link in the chain of missionary endeavor which will some day bind the world in a great Christian fellowship.

This first evangelistic trip made by Brother Van and Dr. Iliff meant much to the new territory of Montana. To-day in making a trip through the same section, you would travel by rail or automobile, but everywhere you would find living monuments of the wise pioneering of these comrade missionaries. Not only new churches, new congregations, and new members, but in many cases new towns have sprung up where the partners held a first service.

The two men have always loved to recount the experiences of those days, and especially to tell about their adventure in crossing Madison River. After the meetings at Virginia City, the two evangelists had an itinerary planned ahead. One appointment was at Madison River schoolhouse. By the mail to Virginia City had come a precious package

from the East for Dr. Iliff's wife. This little woman had come to the West gladly with her earnest young husband, but the people at home had distressing thoughts about the frontier hardships that she had to endure. There were hardships certainly but of these she never complained. Now, here was a package from home!

When the evangelists got into the buggy which was to carry them to the schoolhouse, the precious bundle was carefully stowed away. They traveled to Madison River, which they had to cross, and found it in flood with the melted snow from the mountains. The old bridge had been washed away. So the two young men sat on the edge of the ruins and talked things over.

"Shall we give up the trip?" asked Dr. Iliff.

"No, we can't do that. The people are expecting us," said Brother Van.

"Well, let's try to cross," replied his chum.

In they plunged, driving the horses toward the nearest point on the opposite bank. When they were about one third of the distance across the river the buggy began to float and the horses began to swim.

"Van, can you swim?"

"Not a lick!"

"Well, you get up on the seat, take that package and keep it dry," shouted Dr. Iliff as he jumped out.

He unfastened the horses and they swam to an island in the stream. Then he began to guide the floating buggy toward the bank. In the meantime Brother Van sat still, holding the bundle aloft that it might not be soaked. When they reached the edge of the flood in safety he deposited the bundle on the seat and climbed out into the water to help push the buggy up the steep bank. Valiantly they pushed. The buggy went up slowly and then slid back. Again they boosted and again the slippery banks failed to hold the load.

"Van, you aren't pushing!"

"Yes, I am!"

"Well, I'm all played out. Now let us try once more. Now all together!"

They gave a mighty push and the buggy went over. But, alas! the bundle had slipped out into the water, and as they looked, it was being rapidly carried down-stream. Iliff, who

was standing on the high bank, called out, "Van, you'd better get that package. It belongs to my wife."

In the dismay of the moment, Brother Van forgot that he didn't know how to swim. Out he struck. With mighty splashes and flounderings, he overtook the package and brought it to shore. Then those two preachers stood and looked at each other, wet to the skin, hatless and disheveled, hands torn and bleeding, sermons no longer dry, and the package seemingly ruined. In a moment they burst into boyish laughter, and all was well. While they consulted as to the next move, a ranchman came along and took them home with him. From a promiscuous jumble of clothing the preachers were outfitted. When they were dressed and came into the light of the room and beheld each other, they laughed again like truant schoolboys. They were comical figures enough in the makeshift garments of that frontier home. They went to church in those clothes, and began a revival which meant a great deal to the life of that community.

The bundle? Oh, that was a fine black silk

dress. When the preachers returned to the ranchman's home, they found their own clothes dry and in condition for wearing. The beautiful, lustrous silk found in the package was hung in rich folds about the room to dry. The water in Madison River was crystal clear and did not injure the silk, which was of good grade.

An amazing thing about this evangelistic team was that though of the East eastern, yet they won immediate favor with the people among whom they labored. The shrewd Westerners would have detected any insincerity in the missionaries, and the cowboy's mission in life seemed to be to "shoot up" anything not genuine. It is hard for us to-day to imagine the wild and lawless life on those lonely plains of the great West. These two men, and many other pioneers for the church, carried on their ministry in the face of severe handicaps in a frontier region. The principal difficulties grew out of the isolation of the settlements, and the slow means of communication with the older parts of the country.

The Missouri River provided the natural

means of access to the Northwest, and as early as 1851 fire-boats began to reach Fort Benton. For a long period only one boat a year made this hard passage; then gold was discovered, and there followed a rush of new settlers, so that in 1866, forty steamers came into the old fur-trading post. For a third of a century the stage-coach had no rival as the means of travel for passengers. One of the most famous stage lines was over Mullen's Trail, which ran west from Fort Benton for hundreds of miles. This trail was opened through government land by Captain Mullen and his company of soldiers for the use of miners. Holliday's Overland Stage Line played an important part in the development of the West. It ran from Atchison, Kansas, to Denver, Colorado, and to Salt Lake City, Utah, where other lines connected with it. One of these lines extended to Virginia City in what had been Brother Van's district, and from there to Helena, a distance altogether of nineteen hundred miles, usually covered in twenty-two days.

In order to secure rapid transportation for the mails, the Pony Express was established in

1861 and maintained for three years. A band of swift riders, eighty in number, would cover the vast distances of the prairie in an incredibly short space of time. One rider, for instance, would leave Sacramento, while another rider started from St. Joseph, Missouri, at the eastern end of the route. Each would ride swiftly and as silently as possible, guarding the precious mail at all hazards, and would come, after fifteen to twenty miles of riding, to a station where a fresh horse, saddled and bridled, was held by a waiting agent. The riders were allowed two minutes for the change of horses; then on they went over the ever-widening prairie to the next station. The fastest time in which a piece of mail was ever carried was seven days and seventeen minutes.

Sometimes the station was found to be but a smoking pile of ruins, and sometimes, alas, the station-keeper would be discovered scalped by wandering Indians. It is said that only one package was lost in the three years that the Pony Express was operated. This happened when the rider was killed after being robbed. Another time, the faithful pony came in along

with the package bound safely to the saddle; his rider had been killed as he rode.

Omaha was the nearest railroad station, and to reach this distant city meant a hard journey for the miner who had made his "pile" and wished to go back home. Gold dust was the only money and it was weighed and taken at its weight's value. The traveler could go on horseback or wagon to Fort Benton and then take passage on a steamboat to Sioux City, Iowa. Another method of travel was to follow the trail on horseback to Salt Lake City, and take the train or the stage-coach from there. The cost of the latter mode of travel can be estimated when it is known that the sending of a letter in that way cost two dollars and a half. All travel was dangerous, for with the finding of gold, desperate men had come west, who robbed and killed for the wealth so hazardously secured by the miners. Hold-ups were regular occurrences, particularly between Bannack and Virginia City, a distance of seventy miles.

Miners who had spent months of hard labor in the accumulation of a few hundred dollars

were never heard of again after starting from a mine to a distant home eastward. Men were robbed in camp, daily and nightly. Gambling and all forms of evil abounded. Many of the men who disappeared were found to have been shot ruthlessly. The nature of the country, with its canyons, gulches, and mountain passes, was especially adapted to this means of highway robbery. The unpeopled distances between the mining camps also helped the lawless element to do their bloody work. Nowhere else on the face of the earth, nor at any period since men became civilized, have murder, robbery, and social vice presented such an organized front.

The young territory determined to stop this trade of stage-robbing and formed a protecting band called the "Vigilantes." The name is associated with some of the bloodiest episodes of frontier days. In the absence of any other protection, the Vigilantes took law into their own hands, and dealt sternly with the highway robber and murderer. Between December, 1863, and February, 1864, twenty-four "road agents" were hanged by the Vigilantes for

their crimes against the miners. Two years later, one million and five hundred thousand dollars' worth of gold was taken from Helena to Fort Benton unmolested.

The early Vigilantes were the best and most intelligent men in the mining section. They saw that in the absence of all law they must become a law unto themselves, or submit to the bloody code of the desperadoes by whom they were surrounded. They entered on their work without knowing how soon they might have to encounter a force greater than their own. They did their work swiftly and efficiently as relentlessly they followed the offender. Little mercy was meted out to the guilty men, and many a lonely tree on the plains held ghastly reminders of the swift vengeance which overtook the robbers. The Vigilantes hung many a hardened sinner, giving him first an opportunity to make his peace with God.

Little by little a change was being wrought in the territory, and the missionaries were helping to bring about a condition of law and order. In this period of transformation, Brother Van



DR. THOMAS C. ILIFF AND BROTHER VAN, WHO HAD MANY ADVENTURES TOGETHER IN THE OPENING WEST

was "hail fellow well met" with the people. One gambler said, "I like that old scout, he plays fair." His singing helped him to win them, for he would stand on the hillside and sing, "Shall we Gather at the River," or "Over and Over," and the miners, gamblers, and settlers would come to the service.

Arriving at a typical mining camp one day, the scout-preacher took possession of a new building for a service. It proved to be a saloon such as he had borrowed before. It was an ordinary occurrence for lights to be snuffed out by bullets in a meeting that did not meet with approval from the men, but they did not put out the lights when Brother Van spoke. They liked his simple, sweet message, and, above all, they liked his singing. The song "The Gospel Train is coming" particularly pleased them, for the railroad language held new and fascinating words in a community which was just growing accustomed to the railroad. One of the men said to the preacher, "If you will sing that song to-morrow night, I'll bring forty men to hear you."

"All right, that's a bargain," said the singer.

This man was a leader of the gang. He had a hurdy-gurdy which made his saloon especially attractive. On the next night forty grizzled men marched in and took their seats. No lights were put out. No disturbance was made by the forty who had reserved seats, but something did happen: that "hurdy-gurdy" man got on board of the "Gospel Train" and brought along a number of his comrades.

CHAPTER X

GREAT HEART WITH THE INDIANS

MANY acts of service rendered to his new brothers on his frequent visits to them had made the Blackfeet Indians know that Brother Van was truly their friend. One incident in particular is now of interest to illustrate the character of the red men and the manner in which the missionary won their liking.

One day when White Plume was chief of the Blackfeet and Piegan tribes, camp was made and the evening meal was prepared. Into this busy and picturesque scene came the preacher, and with the aid of an interpreter, he started to speak the good tidings to these people of the plains. The Indians were interested and listened respectfully. Suddenly a runner came quietly but swiftly into the group and uttered an Indian word. Instantly the audience dis-

solved. They went so quickly that the astonished preacher inquired of the interpreter as to the reason of their going. There was reason enough. While these people were listening to Brother Van, the Crow Indians, a rival tribe, had come and driven off the ponies which had been turned out to graze for the night.

When the preacher understood the plight of the Blackfeet, he offered his own fleet pony to them that they might overtake the raiders. Brother Van always had a good horse. The herd was easily overtaken and turned back to the camp. Then, much to the surprise of Brother Van, the Indians returned to the place of meeting and indicated that they wished the service to proceed.

Early on the following morning a messenger came to Brother Van telling him that the Blackfeet were going on a buffalo hunt, and a formal invitation was delivered requesting him to accompany them. Taking his sure-footed pony, Brother Van joined the riders, and soon the excitement of their hunt was on. An Indian honor was then conferred on this, their well-loved guest. After the herd of buffalo

was sighted and had been started on the run, the Indians signified that the white man was to have the distinction of killing the magnificent specimen which was leading the herd. Riding toward the front of the stampeding beasts, the unskilled marksman picked out the herd leader and shot him in the head. It was a great shot. An Indian could have done no better. The herd was a large one, containing nearly one thousand of the great, brown giants of the plains. Once more the preacher by his prowess had won the favor of the Blackfeet.

With such experiences as the buffalo hunt, an Indian feast, a hurried visit to the bed of the sick or dying, and the preaching of the gospel, the years passed. After serving five years as a missionary at large without ordination, Brother Van consented to become a Conference Member, that is to say, a regularly ordained traveling-preacher according to Conference rules. The first missionary appropriation ever made to Montana Conference was given to Brother Van when he became the first regular supply. That allowance was three hundred and twenty-five dollars. He was given the

Sun River and Smith River charge as his first aggressive work in North Montana.

So the Methodist circuit-rider started out once more on his pony with his little all in his saddle-bags. A journey was still one of many hazards, for Indians were everywhere and any sign of fear would have been fatal, while any weakness would have met with scorn from the cowboys. Brother Van visited Sun River, a settlement on the overland freight trail between Helena and Fort Benton, where he organized the first Methodist church north of the mountains. First, Brother Van held a meeting in this settlement and then started a church building. Afterward, he had to rescue the church from the sheriff's hammer, but, finally, he completed the building—assuming responsibility for the rest of the debt. By and by there came a great day when he preached the dedication sermon of a church free from debt.

To this very settlement at Sun River, the tenderfoot Easterner had come with the Adjutant from Fort Shaw shortly after his arrival in Montana several years before, and had announced his desire to hold a service. The

service had been held in the cabin home of Mr. Charles A. Bull. Now, as an experienced plainsman and missionary, Brother Van came again and built a church, over which through the busy years since then, he has kept loving watch.

In Philbrook, Judith Basin, Brother Van found that Indians were stealing horses and terrifying settlers. Prowling bands of raiders were scattered all through the region. Again the scout-preacher was frequently in danger as he went about his ministry. Riding one day along the bank of the Cut Bank River, he saw a powerful Indian in full war-regalia, making rapidly toward the crossing to which he, too, was going. Believing that discretion was the better part of valor, Brother Van turned his horse into a coulee, and rode hastily into the deep shelter of the ravine. From that vantage ground an approaching enemy was at the mercy of the watcher.

The Indian pursued him to the entrance and then gave up the chase. Had he known that the white man was unarmed, this history might never have been written, for the Indian was out

to get revenge upon the whites, and the story of his pursuit afterward created nation-wide interest. It is a gruesome story, but has much of value as it reveals some reasons for the Indian traits which our government has not always understood in the past.

The first scene was enacted when a troop of United States soldiers under Colonel Baker who were quelling Indian troubles, came into an Indian village while the braves were out raiding. They laid waste the camp and killed some three hundred women and children. When the Indian men returned they found desolation, and, of course, could not understand the reason. All that they could think of doing was to set forth again on a raid of devastation. One big brave, Spoo Pee, made a vow to kill the first white man he met, for had not the white men taken the life of his aged mother?

The other scene was enacted when a Canadian prospector having seen enough of western life came down from the North on his way to the nearest railway station that he might return to his home in the East. He drove a

fine team hitched to a good wagon. As he journeyed he met two Indians, one a big brave, the other a stripling of a boy. The Canadian asked his way. The Indian offered himself as a guide to the wealthy traveler and as such was accepted.

A friendship seemed to spring up between the white man and his red companions as they proceeded. The first camp was made and on the next day they were setting forth again when the boy, Good Rider, spied some deer in the distance and asked the loan of a gun that he might bring fresh meat for their evening meal. Walmesley, the Canadian traveler, promptly loaned him his gun and the boy went on his quest for meat. Spoo Pee, the Indian brave, now took his own gun and shot the white man. He threw the body on the muddy bank of the Cut Bank River along which they had been riding.

With the fine horses in their possession, the two Indians came to Fort Shaw, a Piegan Agency, where Major Young was in charge. They remained over night and then went on. These visitors caused much comment at the

agency. Curiosity was aroused because the horses which they were driving were much finer than red men usually had. They were well kept and well fed. The second cause for speculation was that the dog which had come with them stayed behind after the departure of the Indians. An Indian's dog is most faithful. He follows in spite of hunger, distance, or hardships, but here was a dog which preferred the agency to the master.

One day a traveler appeared who reported finding the body of a white man on the bank of the Cut Bank River. The Major sent a party to investigate. Among them was the agency doctor. As the body was examined, the doctor noticed a peculiar scar on the heel of the victim, and he exclaimed, "I went swimming with a man once who had a scar exactly like that one. The man's name was Walmesley." Detectives were put on the case; Spoo Pee was overtaken, and with the boy, Good Rider, was put into jail. The agency doctor, Major Young, and his daughter became the chief witnesses.

Miss Young describes the journey to court

in the thirty-below-zero weather. As she was almost ready to start for Helena, an old, dirty squaw came to see her, and throwing her arms around Miss Young's neck, implored her to save her boy. This was Good Rider's mother. The woman was unwashed and disheveled, because it was the custom of the tribe that no ordinary practise of cleanliness should be observed when an individual was in trouble. Miss Young brought Good Rider back to his mother but Spoo Pee was committed to prison. From the day of his sentence to jail no word or sound passed Spoo Pee's lips for twenty years. After a few years he was considered a harmless lunatic and moved, first to Michigan, and then to an asylum in Washington.

One day a party of western visitors came into the corridors of the asylum. A woman of the party, Mrs. Ella Clark, observed the pathetic, blank face of Spoo Pee, and began to speak in an Indian language. The prisoner observed her with something akin to interest. Failing to secure a clearer response from him, the woman began to croon an Indian lullaby. She sang as a mother to a child. A look of

dazed intelligence appeared on the face of the prisoner. Eagerly Mrs. Clark ceased her singing and began to speak to him. She told of tribal wars and conquests. She repeated traditions held most sacred. The attendants and keepers watched her efforts interestedly. At last from Spoo Pee's long sealed lips there broke an Indian word. The kindly woman's victory was complete, and with tears flowing unchecked, Mrs. Clark told the Indian of his people.

She explained to the keeper the reason that the deed had been committed; how Spoo Pee had returned to his village on that dreadful day and had found the women all slain. The prisoner told of his strange vow and of the long silent years. Spoo Pee was pardoned and he returned to his tribe but only sorrow was his lot. New and strange customs had arisen since he had gone away. His family had become scattered. He could not learn the new ways, and he pined for the friends who had gone. In two years the broken spirit of the red man went to its long rest.

It was this revengeful warrior that Brother

Van had met at the river crossing, but danger held no terrors for him, and that night in the coulee, near the scene of the tragic murder of the Canadian prospector, he took the saddle from his pony, pillowed his head on it, and slept peacefully with the stars smiling down on him. God's protection was with the man who had a vision of the life of peace and righteousness which could come to the West only through the gospel that it was his privilege to preach.

The Epworth Piegan Mission is ministering to these Indians to-day under the leadership of one of Brother Van's "boys," Rev. A. W. Hammer, who, with his talented wife, is continuing the service begun many years ago. Mr. Hammer is peculiarly fitted for this task because he knows the habits and language of the people. He was but a youth when he went west to the plains of Texas as a cowboy in 1877. Later he came to Montana and worked on a ranch not far from Chinook. He craved the opportunity to enjoy the finer pleasures of life, and when a literary society was started at Chinook, he rode in from the ranch to attend it.

One night the meeting place was deserted.

Everybody was at the revival meeting. Taking his pal with him, Hammer went to have some fun. They sat on the back seat and made flippant remarks about the meeting, but confessed to each other that they liked the preacher's singing. The next night found them on that same back seat. A change came to young Hammer in this meeting and he altered his manner of life. He joined the church and took charge of the Sunday-school. He was later given a preacher's license. Then he began to want an education that he might work for his Master more acceptably. He attended school and college and went back to the range to ride and to serve as a shepherd of people, instead of as a cowboy. His life exemplifies the ideal missionary to the Indians.

In Brother Van's new district were the famous great falls of the Missouri, which Lewis and Clarke had heard roaring in the distance as they pushed across the plains. Perplexed as to the cause of the strange sound that rolled to them over the lifeless prairies, they traveled seven miles before they reached the spot where the great river takes its tremendous

plunge. The magnitude of the falls astonished them beyond measure. The largest falls were given separate names later and became known as Great Falls, Rainbow Falls, and Crooked Falls. It is claimed by local residents that the water in Crooked Falls runs in every direction, even upstream. Great power-plants are built along the river at this point, and they produce power second only to Niagara.

When Brother Van reached the settlement of Great Falls on his first visit, it was nothing but a great undeveloped possibility. "Here we must have a church," said this apostle of first things. An ambitious, far-seeing group of men constituting the Townsite Company was interviewed. They gave several lots to the enthusiastic dreamer of a greater day for Montana. With the assured membership of two devoted souls and the gift of land, a church was started.

Is this record of "first things" beginning to make you dizzy? Does the recounting make you weary? But suppose you were the missionary! Through heat and cold, through drought and rain, over green prairie and bleak

desert, you would have to travel. You would have met plainsmen and Indians, friends and foes. You would have endured hunger and thirst. You would have rested under the stars on the open prairie and in the rude shelter afforded by the ranchmen's bunks. You would have been obliged to be the leader in the building of first churches and first parsonages. All this costs energy and vitality, as Brother Van, seemingly tireless though he was, once discovered.

One day death seemed about to claim the scout-missionary. He was very weary and very ill, for mountain fever had him in its firm hold. Then how the little churches rallied to their friend! After much praying and after careful nursing, he was sent on a vacation that he might get well. This was the only sick leave that he has ever had. Forty-five years Brother Van has spent with his "shoulder against the horizon." He has pushed the frontier back and back, and in all those years he has never been ill but once; then nature demanded a rest.

Leaving his friends greatly concerned over his condition, Brother Van went to Seattle,



BROTHER VAN WAS "HAIL FELLOW WELL MET" WITH THE PEOPLE

Washington, to recuperate. That rest period turned out to be something of a joke. In an old record of the Battery Street Church in Seattle, there is an entry showing that certain meetings were held in the church at this time, and noting that the evangelist was W. W. Van Orsdel. He had gone away in October. In December he was back in Montana holding revival meetings from Helena to Glendive, a distance of two hundred and forty miles.

CHAPTER XI

BROTHER VAN AND NEW MONTANA

THE building of railroads through the state of Montana brought a rapid development. The section around Great Falls became a prosperous farming country. The settlement, therefore, formed a new center for the church, and Brother Van came to this district, not as a missionary at large, nor junior preacher, nor circuit-rider this time, he came now as a presiding elder, or district superintendent for all of that part of Montana east of the Rocky Mountains and north of the Musselshell River. It was known as the North Montana Mission and was about five twelfths of the total area of the state. Let us get some idea concerning this new work with which Brother Van was busy by making a comparison. The whole of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland,

and the District of Columbia could be placed within the bounds of the district and still leave four thousand square miles of territory.

In all this area there were three hundred and fifty-five members of Brother Van's church and fifty-three probationers. There were ten church buildings altogether. This property was valued at twenty-five thousand dollars. There were four parsonages valued at four thousand dollars. The twenty Sunday-schools had a membership of nine hundred and twenty-five. The ten preachers received five thousand, six hundred and fifty-one dollars a year, or an average of five hundred and sixty dollars each. The churches gave four hundred and seventy-six dollars to benevolences.

Many of the people whom Brother Van now served came from Eastern homes and were familiar with ideals of culture and refinement. They had cut loose from the East with its old associations and conventionalities, and had come to face a new life on the frontier so full of promise. Imagine a town of two thousand inhabitants composed of people from every state in the Union, and from every civilized

country in the world, of every color, race, and creed, speaking fifteen or twenty languages, and clinging to varying religious beliefs, and you will then have an idea of a mining town such as Brother Van found as he traveled through his district. The West was still, however, the easy prey for evil, and at every cross-road and station could be seen the sign, "Saloon and Licensed Gambling." The gamblers and saloon men were leading citizens, and they had to be reckoned with. Brother Van had been a prohibitionist always. He had seen the effect of alcohol in his boyhood days, especially in the oil regions. As he grew all too familiar with the dreadful fire-water which demoralized and beggared the Indians whom he sought to emancipate, a new hatred of the vile stuff took possession of him.

The Rev. George Logan tells a story of Brother Van as district superintendent which illustrates the spirit of comradeship that he shares with all men, even the saloon men and gamblers. On one Sunday morning Mr. Logan asked for a good collection to make up the district superintendent's salary, saying, "If I

don't get it this morning, I'll come again to-night." The collection was not big enough, and true to his word the second collection was asked for. One man put a stack of six silver dollars on the plate and so the amount received was sufficient to make up the sum required for the unpaid salary.

Going down town next day Mr. Logan met the man of the silver dollars, who with a grin asked, "Did you raise Brother Van's money last night?"

"I did," was the pastor's reply.

"Did you notice that stack of silver dollars on the plate?"

"I did," said Mr. Logan again.

"Well, I'll tell you a story if you'll promise not to get angry about it."

"I promise," said the preacher.

"Two men at the service on Sunday morning remembered afterward that Brother Van's salary was short, and they agreed to play for the money in the afternoon. If A. won, the money was to be Brother Van's; if B. did, Brother Van lost. Word went around and the saloon filled with sports to watch the game. If

A. won, the crowd yelled, 'The Lord gets that!' and if B. was lucky, 'That goes to the devil!'

A. had won, and the unsuspecting District Superintendent's salary was paid by the successful gambler. Mr. Logan looked the narrator in the eye, and said, "I'm so glad I got that money; it has been in the hands of the devil long enough. Brother Van will put it to a better use."

It was through many unique incidents and strange experiences that Brother Van's work was built up. Steadily the character of the country changed and another generation was growing up. Stalwart sons and daughters of the settlers began to try to win a means of education in the desert. They looked beyond the shining mountains to college and to seminary. As Brother Van traveled from place to place he pondered over this problem. No children of his own will look to him for education, but had he not claimed spirituality in this wide land for the children? He saw that the boys and girls were eager for larger social privileges and for a higher intellectual life; so he decided that Montana should have a Christian school. For

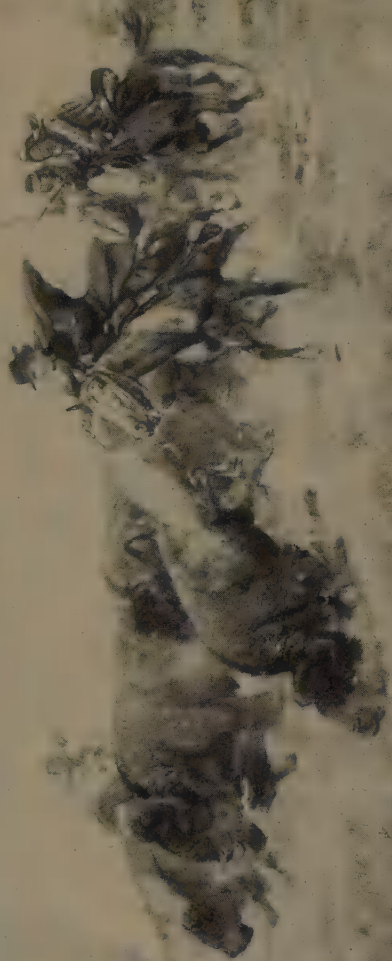
thirteen years he toiled to secure one; other men's names appeared on the committee formed for the enterprise and in time disappeared, but the name of William Wesley Van Orsdel always headed the list. He was not an educated man as far as the study of books was concerned. Only in the School of Experience and in the Seminary of Hard Knocks had he taken postgraduate courses. But he was now determined that the young people of Montana should have first, a Christian influence, and, second, an education.

Because of that thinking, planning, and praying of the missionary, there came a day when the capital city, Helena, had a new asset. Five miles from the center of the town stood a fifty-thousand-dollar brick building dedicated to the young people of Montana. The campus of two hundred and thirty-five acres was beautified, and the school was opened. The distance from town, the newness of the undertaking, the indifference of the people, all proved insurmountable difficulties to every one but Brother Van. For ten years the school struggled to succeed while the trustees felt almost con-

stantly that they must close it, but Brother Van would not consent. Then a radical measure was adopted. The school was moved to Helena, where to-day Montana Wesleyan University stands in friendly neighborliness to the capitol building. Montana Wesleyan antedated all state schools in Montana for higher education.

Brother Van watched those two buildings on Capitol Hill with a peculiar yearning. He remembered the town of Helena as it had looked when he reached it on that summer day in 1872. He remembered the first capitol building in Bannack, where it was his lot to bury the four plainsmen who had lost their lives because the Indians could not understand the coming of the white man into their hunting ground. The first legislature was held in two rooms in a log cabin. Tallow candles emphasized the gloom. Sheet-iron stoves made the pent-up air seem stifling. One desk and a bench in each room completed the furnishing of this first capitol. The library was composed of one copy of the Idaho Statutes.

On February 22, 1889, Montana became a



To Brother Van-
der-
bilt
from
Charles M. Russell
1897

Painting by Charles M. Russell.

RIDING TOWARD THE FRONT OF THE STAMPEDING BEASTS, BROTHER VAN SHOT THE HERD LEADER
IN THE HEAD

state and Helena became the capital. Helena of Last Chance Gulch fame had grown rapidly, as its eastern seekers of gold became housed in cabins, wickiups, shacks, and tents. Helena became a wicked city, where Sunday was the wildest day of the wild week. Then came a period of reconstruction. Schools were built, imposing sites were sought for churches; the dugout school disappeared from the prairie, and in its place came the little red schoolhouse. The first public school had been opened on March 5, 1866, in Virginia City. There were no text-books. Every child brought any book he might possess. Now schools were becoming common in Montana. Daily papers were needed and in place of the *Montana Post*, which had been published in the cellar of a log cabin in Virginia City and dates from May, 1868, came the *Montana Record Herald*.

Montana had a state pride and no man could surpass Brother Van as he sang the praises of his adopted state. As civilization progressed the new State-house now standing on Capitol Hill was needed. This was a thrilling time in the life of the young state. When the impos-

ing building was completed and ready to be dedicated, Montana's representatives gathered and stood with bared heads as Brother Van offered this prayer:

"O thou God of our fathers, we draw near to thee in the name of thy Son, our Saviour, to acknowledge the many blessings of which we are the recipients, on this our nation's birthday; the day when this was declared to be a free and independent nation, and which now stands out among the nations as a star of the first magnitude. O God, may thy presence ever abide with our nation. We invoke thy blessing on our President, and those associated with him in directing the affairs of the nation.

"We are here in this great new commonwealth, pioneer men and women, who came here in the earlier settlements and opened up the way for success; we are here to-day with our children and associates to honor the state and thee. We are here to dedicate and set apart this magnificent building, this capitol building, to the purpose for which it was built. Let thy blessing rest on the exercises of this hour. May thy blessing rest on the govern-

ment of the state, the officers, the capitol commission, and all who have been associated with the planning and completing of the building.

"Let thy blessing be upon our representatives, on both houses of congress, on state senators and legislators, who shall meet in this house from time to time. May we all realize that great is that people whose God is the Lord. May we flee evil. Amen."

The walls of the Senate Chamber of that great building are adorned with paintings done by Mr. Charles Russell, who came to Montana in 1881 and achieved fame as the cowboy artist. No creation of his brain or brush ever exploits any theme but Montana and the West. The modern home of Mr. Russell is at Great Falls and in the spacious grounds surrounding it stands a log cabin. Let us visit it with Brother Van, who is an old-time friend of the owner.

The porch has no board floor and is low, so we can see the roof strewn with buffalo horns and skulls. On the stockade-door the latch-string hangs out, and it means just that, a true Western hospitality. We pull the string, the latch lifts, and we stand in the presence of the

cowboy artist. He looks both cowboy and artist. His long hair is thrown back from a strong and sun-browned face, and this suggests the artist; so does the scarlet sash that he wears. His flannel shirt is open at the throat, and his Khaki trousers are thrust into high boots, showing the habit of the cowboy.

Around that interesting room is a record of the history of Montana. War-bonnets and tomahawks hang from pegs. In a rack are rifles which tell the story of firearm progress from the flintlock to the Springfield, and then to the Winchester. Indian beads, rugs, baskets, and blankets form a wealth of color on the walls, and before a great fireplace stands an easel, and lo, the artist is telling our story in a finer way. There are the figures of Lewis and Clarke on the canvas. An Indian village is in the background, and in the center we recognize the woman guide, Sacajawea. She is meeting her childhood friend who had been taken prisoner when she was.

As he watched Montana develop with the anxiety that a father gives to the growth of an awkward, beloved boy, Brother Van saw a new

need. Always had he ministered to sick and dying miners, cowboys, and settlers. But as the years passed he saw that it would be a great advantage to the state if the sick and dying could be cared for with all the help that modern medical science affords. He realized the necessity of placing patients under religious influence and teaching. The cure of souls was to him even more important than the cure of bodies; so he began to talk and to pray for a Christian hospital. Probably fifty thousand dollars has passed through Brother Van's hands in the time he has served Montana, but he owns no home or cattle. Even the pony is no more and a Ford is not its successor. The salary for his first year's work was nothing, and for the second it was seventy-five dollars. In later years he received seventeen hundred dollars. Yet every Protestant enterprise has had an impetus from Brother Van's pocketbook.

He interested his church in the need of a hospital, and deaconesses were brought west and a hospital was started. Every one but the prime mover became discouraged by the hardships that the project encountered, but he continued

to sing, to pray, to praise Montana, and to work for Montana. In Great Falls now stands a beautiful hospital, entirely fireproof and modern in every convenience. In the hall of the building hangs a painting. It is a western scene, and shows a man riding furiously toward the leader of a herd of buffalo; Indians ride behind as interested spectators to the shooting of the large beast. The inscription below is "Brother Van shooting buffalo," and it illustrates the story already told. The artist is Charles M. Russell.

Across the street is the Van Orsdel Home where white-capped and swift-footed nurses reside, and this is the story of the building. Once upon a time some gamblers, cowboys, and saloon men decided that they, too, wanted to tell Brother Van that they wished him well. He had fought the saloon with a zeal that could not be misunderstood, but he fought fairly. He hated the business and told its supporters so in no mincing language; but he didn't hate the men and they knew that. They decided to raise one thousand dollars and give it to him that he might buy a home of his own, or that he

might have the money to do as he wished. The fund was started. At first it grew slowly and then by bounds. It was put in a bank and as time went by the deposit was forgotten. A gambler, who was on his death-bed, wanted to see Brother Van. He answered the call at once, and was able to help the dying man hear from the Master, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." In his last moments the man told about the money that was lying in the bank and accumulating interest. Brother Van drew it out and soon a nurses' home was started.

Within the walls of the Van Orsdel Home is a home life of rare culture and beauty. Many girls are sheltered and trained there who were brought to the pioneer preacher as infants twenty years earlier that he might lay hands on them in baptism. At the beginning of each school year of the Nurses' Training School, Brother Van greets those uniformed students with encouraging words and with a tender appeal for loyalty to the Master whom he serves.

One of Brother Van's enterprises seemed not to be of God's planning. That was the original home of Montana Wesleyan, five miles

from Helena. People spoke of the neglected building as a mistake and an expensive failure. Boys threw stones through every pane of glass in the three-story building. A family of lively coyotes occupied the big dining-room; bats took up their abode in the dark corners; spiders spun their webs unhindered over the ceiling, and owls seemingly joined the scoffers in their derision of the enterprise. Occasionally a solitary figure would come into the building and kneeling in the dust, would implore God to give him a reason against the prevalent unbelief. He would ask God to use these buildings for his own service, and for the Christian uplift of young people. Surely there was some use for them. The years passed, and this solitary figure began to see another need for his cherished Montana. The young people had long since been coming to the university on Capitol Hill, but in the wide expanses of the state there were yet many children unschooled. There were orphans to be protected, and other children too far from the district school for daily attendance. These became a new and dear care to Brother Van.



THE VAN ORSDEL HOME FOR NURSES IS ONE OF THE MANY INSTITUTIONS FOUNDED BY BROTHER VAN

Again the old pocketbook made a beginning. As the hard-earned money went for the house-cleaning a gift came to Brother Van; a grateful ranchman presented him with a cow. It was driven promptly to the two hundred-and-thirty-five-acre campus which surrounded the neglected building out by Helena, so that the few children he might gather there should be fed. The building, so recently the home of the bats and the coyotes, was cleaned and repaired and put in readiness for its first pupil, a child whom a dying mother committed to the care of Brother Van. Others needing school advantages were found and placed in the renovated building. The title page of the first *Annual* published by the students of this school of faith is inscribed: "To Brother Van as an expression of love from the class of 1915."

Not all the time was Brother Van building churches. There are one hundred churches in Montana built by him, and about fifty parsonages due to his labors, besides six hospitals and two large institutions of learning, but there is another piece of work which he has been doing between times for the church he loves. Since

1876 he has represented the Methodist Church of Montana in the denomination's great governing body, the General Conference. At the meeting at Saratoga Springs in 1916, one evening was given over to the two friends, Dr. Thomas C. Iliff and Brother Van. They recounted the struggles and triumphs of their western life, and sang the old songs which had carried inspiration to the people of the west.

A few years ago Brother Van made a long trip across the country and came again to Gettysburg, where, as a boy, fifty-four years before, he had witnessed that great battle. A large part of the land where the battle was fought has been bought by the United States government, and the government and the states spent seven million dollars in erecting the memorials that do honor to the men who fell in those July days of 1863. Brother Van saw again the house in which President Lincoln was entertained when he made that memorable address familiar to-day to every schoolboy and schoolgirl. He recalled how he had gone to seek the sad-faced man. He had come into his presence a towsled, barefoot,

awkward boy, and with new appreciation he remembered how that great man had shaken hands with him. Since then other presidents have shaken hands with the boy grown into a missionary. Grant, Roosevelt, and Taft have all done honor to the man so well loved in Montana.

CHAPTER XII

SEVENTY YEARS YOUNG

THE haze of Indian summer hangs over the prairies of Montana as they flaunt their golden flowers. There could be no more perfect days than these for a journey with Brother Van through the great state. One might almost call it his parish, so closely has he been associated with the settlement and growth of vast stretches of its territory. He shall be our guide as we visit the widely scattered villages and thriving towns, where he is eagerly welcomed by men, women, and children of all faiths and of none. There are no strangers to Great Heart of the Indians. Brother Van greets every one he meets with the Indians' guttural "Oi-Oi-Oi," meaning "How do you do!" When we ask why he always uses the expression, he replies, "Oh, just to show that I'm a friendly Indian."

We start our trip at Fort Benton, where, in a well kept park, stand the ruins of the old

fort, a crumbling relic of days forever past. The stockade is gone and only a blockhouse remains. It is carefully guarded, for inside are precious relics of the past. Let us stand on the very spot where Brother Van celebrated his first Fourth of July in Montana by eating a dinner of jerked buffalo meat. Our eyes sweep the horizon and we try to imagine the scenes of former days when over those flashing waters of the Missouri came bull-boats or birch canoes, bringing precious furs to the Northwest Fur Company's post.

In the town itself we pass the site of the old mud saloon where, on that far-away Sunday, the tenderfoot missionary preached to a curious throng. What of the church life of to-day? We spend a Sabbath in the historic town and go to the old mother church. It is a small building, simple in style, but we enter it in a spirit of reverence. Repairs are in progress; with his own hands the minister, a college and seminary graduate, has painted the woodwork and papered the walls. He has been aided in the evenings by the earnest men of his congregation.

The days of the Northwest Fur Company seem very remote when the new generation, with a small group from the older one, kneel to receive Holy Communion. The life of the trapper and trader, starved and godless, seems a haunting and an impossible dream. Yet the pastor has his problems. His church must be enlarged and modernized to meet the social demands of the little city. He must find means for providing recreation and wholesome entertainment in connection with the church, so that the people of the community may not have to depend for their amusement on the cheap "movie" theater with its sensuous appeals. He must travel far out on the wide prairie to care for the ranchers who are setting up homes in these lands that under new methods of cultivation are proving to be far more fruitful than it was once considered possible for them to be.

The scout-missionary is still keen about first churches, and we accompany him on a visit to a little town near Fort Benton. We go to the schoolhouse. We are early; so we will play janitor. The bell is to be rung. The song-books are to be distributed. Brother Van does

not preach this time, but his influence is felt all through the service. He stands in the closing moments and urges upon the people a new loyalty to Jesus Christ and a new loyalty to the church as the center of their common life. All who will so pledge are asked to come and take him by the hand, and every man, woman, and child in the little group comes forward. Among them are three soldiers, guards in the uncertain days of war of the big bridge which swings over the Teton River at the outskirts of the town.

One of Brother Van's churches is in process of building in this town. You may smile at its dimensions. It has one main room and a basement which is to be cut up into smaller social rooms.

"Well, Brother Van, when is it to be finished?" he is asked.

"Don't know, Sister!"

"Why not finish it right away?"

"I'd love to, but not one cent of debt is to be placed on this or on any other church I have anything to do with."

"But, can these few people build this church?"

"They can and will, with the help of the Board of Home Missions."

"Ah, if people only knew the need of home missions, we would not have to see these churches which we try to put in the new centers struggle and languish as they do," he adds.

"Why try to have a church so soon, then?"

"Ah, Sister, that is the point. We must claim these new towns for our Christ. The devil has his agents at work in the saloon and dance halls. Why should we give up to him?"

In that distant time when Brother Van made his first visit to the Indian agency, he traveled in an army post wagon. As we seek the Black-foot Indians, we travel with him on a railroad train. His vivid stories of the towns through which we pass make us realize how much the frontier owes to missionary influence. Brother Van gets off at every station to look around.

"See that church house," he exclaims proudly, for he always calls it that. "Isn't it beautiful?"

It is small and in need of paint. Compared, however, to the saloon building in which he had probably held the first service, it is beautiful.



GREAT HEART WITH A BLACKFOOT BROTHER AND HIS FAMILY

"Browning! Browning!" calls the conductor. Nothing here but a small station.

"This way, Brother Van," calls a voice from the starlit darkness, and soon we are on our way to the Indian reservation and the parsonage home of Rev. A. W. Hammer, the cowboy preacher. A cheerful welcome awaits us in the little prairie home. Here in the shadow of the snow-clad mountains is symbolized the Montana dreamed about by the boy from Gettysburg. A home has been established. A trained preacher ministers to the Indians.

On the following morning we find spread out before us a scene of rich beauty as we look across the fields from which the grain has been harvested. All the members of the household gather in front of the cottage where there stands a straight mountain pine, carefully trimmed and braced. From a home-made cabinet the oldest daughter has taken a carefully folded bundle, and now at her bidding it is fastened to the ropes swaying from the pine tree. A steady pull brings Old Glory up to catch the breeze while the shining mountains seem to smile approval. The son places his hat

over his heart, while Brother Van, his head bared, his face transfigured, sings, "O say can you see by the dawn's early light" and girlish voices catch up the refrain. No flag raising in the presence of statesmen and of armies could be more impressive. Here one sees the loyal soul of the west laid bare. This is the America that the forces of the Christian church, the Christian home, and the Christian school are building on the vast plains and through the mountain valleys of the younger states.

The drive to the church in a lumber wagon is a novel experience, and we understand why fur overcoats are called "life preservers," for the air gives a foretaste of the winter's cold. The congregation of Indians, plainsmen, business men, and college graduates gathers. The Indians interest us the most. These are the adopted brothers of Great Heart. These are the people whom William Van Orsdel loved before he had seen them and whom he had left the old Gettysburg home to serve. He has seen disease, ignorance, and intemperance threatening to wipe out the race, and he has had to give a large part of his energy to teaching a better

way of life to the white man who is so largely responsible for the conditions that exist; but he has persevered in finding ways to help his red brothers.

In the United States there are now three hundred and thirty-six thousand Indians; nearly one third of these are unchurched. There are many who have no opportunity to know the living God, yet they were the first Americans. Their loyalty was proved when nine thousand young braves entered the army and navy to fight for a world democracy, and one third of those entered the service through enlistment. These wards of the nation, though driven back from wide prairie to reservations, have been taught trades and agriculture. Twenty million dollars worth of Liberty Bonds were bought by Indians. The war has given the Indian an opportunity to show his fine qualities of manhood, and to demonstrate his fitness for those privileges of citizenship which have been denied him. Hereafter, too, this native American will be a citizen of the world. "They have learned to step to the drum-beat of democracy," says Hon. Cato Sells, "and they will

come out of the conflict an element of real and progressive strength in our National life." Like many others who have fought abroad, they will ask the churches and schools to put into practise the principles that they defended "over there."

The teachers to succeed Brother Van, Mr. Hammer, and all of that host of devoted workers who have given their whole lives for the building of a Christian civilization in the west must come from the young people of the church. Young men and young women of the new generation must have a vision clear enough to see the beckoning hands that point the way to great unfinished tasks. The high purpose of the boy from Gettysburg must fill other lives that will take up the new tasks, as hard as the old, perhaps harder, which the changing times have brought to Montana.

Leaving the Indians, we find ourselves on the railroad and bound for the new frontier. The monotony of the prairie is only relieved by homes and schoolhouses but these appear at intervals as we travel. Occasionally we pass small towns clustering around grain elevators,

which show the new day of agriculture. We come at last to the end of our journey to the new section and from the small station we drive to a settler's shack on a claim. Surely tales of frontier life have been exaggerated, for here are warmth, blooming plants, books, and papers. The homesteader is a retired preacher.

"We must get the surveyor while you are here, Brother Van, and mark up that lot for the church," says our host.

"A church out on this prairie!" we exclaim.

"Yes, do you see yonder that grain elevator and a few buildings? That is a new town starting and we must have a church. A saloon and a pool-room are there already. The storekeeper has given us a lot for the church," he explains.

This is a wise merchant who realized that the new town would not be fit for his family unless the church was the central interest. With pick and compass we go; Brother Van steps off the distance, and the faithful pick finds the marker.

"The corner-stone will be right here," says the master of ceremonies. The spade is stuck

into the rich soil while the people cheer; but Brother Van is silent; his latest church is being started. He is anxious that the children of the new town shall have a chance of a Christian education. The government will see to the schoolhouses, but the responsibility of the churches rests on Brother Van and his aids, even on you and me.

We continue our sight-seeing tour of Montana and reach Helena at a time when the city is thronged with visitors to the Fair. Yonder is the Capitol, and in friendly nearness is a smaller building; it is Montana Wesleyan University where college is opening. Brother Van has a tumultuous greeting. The Board of Trustees has just declared for a fifty-thousand-dollar enlargement of the institution. The students and President Sweetland are riotously happy. Visitors make speeches in the chapel. One man does not need the well-chosen introductory speech from the new president. He is not allowed to finish it.

"Who's all right?" sings out a yell-leader.

"Brother Van! Brother Van!" comes roaring back from the eager crowd.

No mention is made by the pioneer of his part in the enterprise which has made the Christian education of these eager students possible. When he finishes speaking, a demand is made: "A song! A song!" So he sings "Diamonds in the Rough" for them. Then we hasten to a meeting of the Board of Trustees, and arrive in time, for Brother Van is never late for an engagement.

"Now, let's go to the Fair!" he says. To go to the Montana State Fair with Brother Van is to become almost as much a center of interest as the prize pumpkin or the heaviest sheaf of wheat. The hold the man has on the people of the state begins to dawn on you.

"Hello, Van, old scout."

"Why, Brother Van, how is the church at ——?"

"Isn't this Brother Van?" ask children, shyly, as we pass.

Out in the enclosure a flag is to be raised. They send a messenger to Brother Van to say that he is wanted to offer the prayer. After the prayer, Governor Stewart is introduced, and the heart of the Eastern visitor is stirred

to hear from him how great a part this new state took in the great world struggle for democracy; how great an outpouring of its wealth there was for the needs of the government and for the relief of suffering; and how large a number of the boys from these thinly peopled plains left their homes to take their places in the ranks of the armies of freedom.

It is a short drive over to the once owl-haunted, coyote-inhabited building, which for a time seemed to be Brother Van's mistake. Children's voices call a glad greeting, for now it is the Montana Deaconess School. Out on the campus is an old building which the boys have fitted up, and which they dignify by the name of "gym." Class work which meets the regular school standards is done in this home, but that is only a part of its work. The development of strong, helpful Christian character is the great task to which the earnest teachers who labor here are devoting themselves.

Now we visit the Capitol, a beautiful building of which the young state is justly proud. We go directly to the Governor's suite and find



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A COPPER MINE AT BUTTE

A new America must be won in the restless, throbbing centers of industrial life

a delegation of citizens there waiting to consult him. The attendant smiles on one member of our party and then disappears. We resign ourselves for a long wait, but immediately the messenger returns. "The Governor will see you, Brother Van," he says. We then have the privilege of listening to a conference between the pioneer missionary and modern Montana's chief man of affairs.

It is near Helena that Last Chance Gulch is situated and the city still presents the problems of a mining center. In the old days the miners came without families. They lived the hard, rough life of the pioneers. Many were only adventurers. They gambled, and even killed for the lure of gold. Yet it was they who found and developed the mines which have furnished so large a share of Montana's wealth—and that of the nation.

Not only gold, but silver, copper, lead, coal, and iron are found. Especially rich are the fields of copper, and since 1892, Montana has been the leading state in the production of this metal. Great smelting and refining plants costing millions of dollars have been established

around which thriving cities have quickly grown. In the maze of stacks, mills, ore-dumps, tracks, and surrounding streets filled with the cottages of the laborers, the visitor who has been to the new settlements on the plains and to the reservations sees a different Montana—not that of the rancher and the Indians but that of the industrial worker.

We have an enthusiastic guide when we travel through the mining regions with Brother Van. He keeps the spirit of the pioneer. While his work has led him more among the Indians and the plainsmen, he sees the great needs that have arisen with the growth of the industrial centers. He is eager that the Christian forces of America undertake new tasks of helpfulness for the men who toil underground and in the mills, and for their families.

It is in Butte that we find the heart of the great copper region of Montana. From the hill north of the city, ore to the value of a million and a half dollars has been taken. When Brother Van made his first visit there he found but fifty residents. Not only is it now a busy city of forty thousand inhabitants, but the char-

acter of the community has entirely changed. The settlers of that period were of American birth and parentage. To-day the great majority of the miners are from distant countries. The pioneers of the days of Brother Van's young manhood lived the hearty open life of the wind-swept plains; the newcomers from Europe must toil in the dark mine shafts or amid the dust and roar of the mills and smelters.

Coming as these workers do for the most part from southern and eastern Europe, differing greatly in customs and in language from the older population, they must be given special guidance, if they are to find the real America of their dreams. They will attain the kind of citizenship which will make them able to take a really helpful place in the life of the country only as we interpret Christian ideals for them. It was for these ideals of democratic brotherhood that the young men of America went abroad and for which thousands of them gave their lives. Is America now to show to those who have come as strangers to us, and who do such a large share of the hard work of our coun-

try, that these ideals of democratic brotherhood are being put into practise for the benefit of all?

Brother Van found a frontier region when he stepped ashore from the river boat at Fort Benton on that July morning in 1872. He threw himself into the life about him, and his years of service have brought friendship and hope and courage to lonely men and women and to aspiring young people all over a great commonwealth. Cowboy, Indian, and miner have welcomed his help, for, as they put it, he "prayed lucky." There is need to-day—there will always be a need—for the same ministry that Brother Van has been carrying on in his founding of new churches, and in his friendly visiting in lonely homes, and in his preaching anywhere and everywhere the word of cheer and of faith that his whole life taught. And as a part of the same great task to which he has devoted all his years, Brother Van will tell you that there is need for another kind of scouting to-day in the land of the shining mountains.

This vast development of modern industry calls for new and varied kinds of service. The

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thrill of adventure is there, although it may be different from that which was found in the early days of the frontier, and the joy of conquest remains. The winning of a new America is yet to be achieved in many of those restless, throbbing centers of industrial life where men have not yet learned how to bring the spirit of Christ into their daily toil; where home life is narrow and harsh; where growing boys and girls are shut out from the opportunities for recreation and for training, that a preparation for healthy, capable citizenship demands.

As we leave Brother Van looking out over the wide plains of his beloved Montana and gazing at the great black masses of the mills and mines with the dismal clusters of miners' cottages around them, we know what he is thinking about. It is of the new scouts who will come to occupy these frontiers of modern industrial and community life for the Master. And we know that only those who are worthy to be called Great Heart will be able to carry on in the new age of world democracy the tasks that have been so well begun in the old days of the opening West.

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Brummitt, Mrs. Stella (Wyatt)

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